SUMMARY

Nation-Building	and the	New	Nationa	lism	in	Kazakhstan
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Scientific coordinator: Ph.D. Candidate:

Prof. univ. dr. habil. Sergiu MIȘCOIU Alin ROMAN

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This first part of the work is focused on gathering sufficient information so as to form a clear picture on the formation of the nation-state by means of specialized literature. The resulting theory will be later applied, in conjunction with the specific elements of Central and Inner Asian statehood, to identify the common elements, as well as the differences, between the formation of the nation-state in Europe and that in our area of interest. The study over specialized literary sources allowed us to extract the elements that are necessary in a clear and objective definition of the nation-state, mandating us to base our arguments around a central, universally-applicable idea: *nation = politically autonomous identity group*.

The debate over the formation and consolidation of the nation was developed by taking into account a number of criteria and was approached from different angles, and based on these elements, two main traditions of interpretation have been identified: the perennalist approach (also known as primordialism), and the modernist one. The main element that separates these two approaches is the manner in which the nation is characterized based on its evolution throughout history. Primordialists believe that identity groups - and, through their nature, nations – are timeless and perennial, while modernists will signal the evolution of identity groups through history in an effort to accurately pinpoint the time in which the nation has arisen. Arguments favoring one or the other have been formed on the basis of interdisciplinary criteria: historical, socio-political, philosophical and anthropological.

Thus, we can distinguish between those that favored the concept of nation-state (nationalists) and those that opposed it to a higher or lesser extent (anti-nationalists). This classification, however, is not dictated solely by bias, as scholars tended to ponder on this subject in accordance to their scientific or social background: primordialists tended to be found among the ranks of historians and nationalists, while modernists tended to be sociologists and anti-nationalists.

Finding its roots in the Latin term *natio*, the concept of nation began developing following the collapse of the Western Roman Empire and throughout the Middle Ages, being initially used to designate an accompanying quality of a certain group of people – nobility,

craftsmen, guilds and unions. If we are to understand the connection between the Latin meaning of *natio* (birth) and the application of the term in defining a specific group, we must view *natio* more or less as an umbrella term that seeks to highlight an inborn trait or quality of the group it describes, a state of existence or a unchangeable state of affairs that characterizes the group in question. This comes as an evolution or alteration of the classical Roman view of identity, as *natio* would not be the term used to designate a specific group of people — especially when concerning the non-citizens of the Roman city-state. Instead, the word *gens* would be the equivalent of the medieval interpretation of *natio*, as the term *gens* would fulfill the same role: defining an inborn trait. The idea of *gens* played a pivotal role in the evolution of Roman society, as it would form the core of social identification and status, and being used to underline those aspects that would be deemed important for ones standing:

- Community of origin *gens* being used to designate origin;
- Social standing designating the social class;
- Patriliniality and dynasty.

Primoridalism is characterized by frequent contextualization, with research into the hystorical perspectives being subordinated to the national project and with a strong focus on national narrative. In matters of hystoriography, the nation became, under these circumstances, an explainatory framework for understanding the historical past, rather than an explorable and deconstructible focus of research

If the topic of nation has been gradually evolving following the onset of the Age of Enlightenment, the socio-political circumstances nineteenth century had triggered an emergence of dedicated studies and theories. Core to this scholarly movement was the debate over the outcome of the migration of Germanic tribes into the Western Roman Empire. A rift dictated by the different interpretation of the socio-political process which the nation required to undergo took shape, often under the influence of remnant populist ideas which were carried on following the French Revolution.

The manifestation of the primorialist approach came as a response to the territorial dispute between the French and the Germans over the region of Alsace-Lorraine, with both camps interested not only in ensuring a *de-jure* ownership over the land, but also in solidifying

its claims through hystorical arguments. Through this process, the centralized French state legitimized its claim over a territory that it viewed as belonging to it given the importance it had in the perceived formation of the French nation.

Primordialist theses promote the idea that the nation is a timeless reality, being tethered to eternity and the absolute, far above mundane occurance. The nation is thus less regarded as a willingly-settled political community, and more as either the predestined consequence to the evolution of an ethnicity, or as the direct result of deliberate divine intervention. In this situation the role of ethnogenesis is prioritized, being viewed as fundamental in the formation and function of the nation, to which the ability of the identity group to organize itself politically becomes secondary. The formation of ethnicities became the primary concern of primordialists, who conceptualized identity as an issue of ethnic liniarity, and was self-explanatory to the formation of nations. To the majority of primordialist historians, ethnogenesis occured within ambiguous timestamps – an issue that is yet to find consensus in the academic world and that continues to be debated. The agreement is, however, that the process of the formation of an ethnicity occurs outside of perceiveable time, passing into the realm of the immemorial. Primordialists have put a great amount of effort in appropriating cultural mythology to the creation of national identity, giving the process of ethnogenesis a divine dimension, oftentimes in association with historical and heroic facets.

Primordialist theses reflected a societal need at the time of their conception, functioning as tools in the establishment and consolidation of the nation-state and offering grounds for further evolution in the debate over the nation.

Modernist definitions of the nation reject the idea that the existence of ethnicities is the sole justification for the birth of the nation, and sought to understand its appearance through a different methodology. A specific aspect of modernism is its use of analysis through deconstruction, breaking apart a "whole" to its basic elements.

As a form of opposition to primordialism, the modernist approach argues that as the traditional societal norms were virtually wiped-out, the emerging political entities of Europe engaged in a lengthy process of institutionalization of authority – on one hand aided by the

framework that has survived in isolated repositories, and on the other in accordance to the new ethno-socio-cultural landscape.

Overall, modernist theses create a good platform on which the history and evolution of nations can be analyzed by offering a scientific perspective. Its approach is more objective, less passionate and less prone to bias and to fabrication. The modernist theses, however, disregard a multitude of elements linked to the formation and existence of the nation-state, mostly due to their contradictory relation to primordialism, which explains the downplay of identity aspects such as ethnicity.

The theses that were investigated in the first chapter lay a foundation on which further arguments have been built, and, as we have understood from what the multitude of mentioned scholars have concluded, identity is an evolving concept. Understanding Kazakhstan means understanding Central-Asian nomadism, for nomadism is core to the development of identity in Central Asia.

The topic of nation-building in Central and Inner Asia continues to puzzle scholars given the peculiarity of social evolution which was specific to the land for most of its history. Researchers that have based their study on history have been prone to jump to precocious conclusions by analyzing the social pattern of Central Asia through the lenses of classical European history and social theory. However, their oversight is easily excusable when taking into account the intertwined history between Europe and Central Asia. This oftentimes unilateral relation between the two geographical zones had a major influence in the development of national theory during the nineteenth century, being considered a key factor in the "billiard ball" model of social history.

The classical cultures of Europe were not strangers to collision with nomadic groups of - as Davies puts it - horsemen, and this kind of relation would remain established for a long period of time. The Hunnic invasion remained culturally-significant due to its scale and success, with the Huns knocking on the gates of both Constantinople, in the East, and Rome, in the west - a feat that would remain unprecedented.

As scholarly preoccupation remained largely bound to the activity of the Church, later investigation into the topic of migratory people and steppe empires were confined to works its

works. Such works, however, portray an inaccurate image of the historical occurrences, and paint an exaggerated image of society given the clear bias of their original writer. In spite of these shortcomings, however, Christian hagiography puts several important things into perspective which can highlight the notions of identity.

Huns were envisioned not as a mere enemy, but as an existential threat to the existence of Christianity itself. This created an antithesis between the invaded and the invaders, with the Christians representing the body that maintained the social order built by the Roman imperial administration, and continued – albeit among religious lines – by Rome as the seat of Christianity. This point of view may not accurately reflect the general sentiment felt at the time of the Hunnic invasion, but it does underline the expanding influence and control of Christianity – particularly of Catholicism. The Hunnic threat was indeed noted for its military success deep within Europe, but, over time, it became an element of religion as a substitute for ideology. Christian hagiography paint a relation of antithesis which can be broken down to the motif of "good against evil", with the good encapsulating the community of believers embodied in the Christians, and the evil being the non-believers – the Huns.

This particular way of thought did not emerge, however, in the Christian world. The settled classical cultures of Europe have had a long and complicated history of interaction and clashing with the nomadic steppe peoples, with a special emphasis on the plains that lie north of the Black Sea. Hellenistic Greece whose influence reached the Pontic shores came in direct contact with the Scythians, a steppe people of Iranic descent, somewhere around the 7th century BCE.

Given the prolonged contact between the established polities and empires of classical Europe with the people of the steppes - which they collectively called Scythians, it is clear that a more or less clear definition of nomad was formed, granting the settled populations at least a vague notion of the societies that existed on the steppes of the Black and Caspian Seas. And, as we have deduced thus far, these notions were often influenced by stereotypes and by bias, creating the premises in which a dichotomy between the settled Europeans and the roving Scythians/nomads took root in the general psyche.

The same attitude can be discovered when analyzing the folklore and chronicles of medieval Eastern Europe. Neighboring the Eurasian steppes, the polities of this region of the continent have been in uninterrupted direct contact with the pastoral nomads, and were subjected to frequent fluctuations of peace and conflict with these groups. The medieval Slavic polities of Eastern Europe - with their most noteworthy example being the Kievan Rus - bore witness to the evolution of political authority over the steppes. A major change in steppe society was the replacement of the overall identity background of the inhabitants, with the Iranic groups that once formed the Scythian identity being dissipated or absorbed by the new dominant identity: Turkic.

It is of capital importance to understand the fact that this process of migration was not a wholesale push of entire ethnic groups on an east-to-west axis and, in spite of the inevitable clash with the settled populations of the newly-reached areas they seldom triggered mass-displacement. Instead, we must regard the formation of such short-lived states by taking into account the context under which they took place: the vanishing authority of a once-centralized empire, leaving behind sustainable communities. As a result, given their military advantage over such areas, nomadic groups would enact political control by superimposing dynastic rule over the existing power structure, creating a ruling class which extracted tribute from the subjected population. Over time, through inter-marriage, through the adoption of local trades and customs, and though the weakening of the ruling class, these peoples would gradually meld in the general background, maintaining a decreasing number of distinguishing aspects. In the case of Eastern Europe, of great relevance is the relation with the Kipchak Turks. Tracing their origins in the Mongolian-Manchurian Grassland, the Kipchaks quickly became the dominant group in the Eurasian steppe, creating a loose confederation of tribes that sprawled from the western reaches of the Altay Mountains to the plains of the lower Danube.

A good study case, the Mongol Empire toppled the power dynamic in the eastern reaches of Europe, the Kipchak confederations falling prey to its aggression. The traumatic effect of the Mongol invasion sent ripples throughout Europe yet again, changing the manner in which identity was perceived by the outsiders. The term *Scythian* noticeably fell out of use (although it continued to be employed for more localized analyses or in works that respected that paid lip service to classical tradition), in its stead rising the notion of *Tatar* (often *Tartar* in Western

sources). Similarly, the geographic designation of the area suffered a great transformation, with terms such as *Scythia* or *Cumania* falling out of use in favor of *Tartaria*, *Tartary* or *Terra Tartarorum*.

Naturally, the settled peoples of Europe had little desire or need to understand the full complexity of the socio-political patchwork of steppe nomadic society and named these peoples on the basis of their natural environment, of their commonalities or of their foremost political traits: dwelled region, language, religion, model of socio-economic life, dominant political or social identity etc.

Therefore, it should come as no surprise that, given the traumatic experiences of the past and given the perpetuation of such experiences through the writings of the Church or of the classical sources and of the increasingly-frequent travels of explorers to Central and Inner Asia (e.g. Marco Polo, William of Rubruck, Giovanni da Pian del Carpine etc.), a specific notion of the Eurasian nomad had endured through time in the European consciousness. Turko-Mongolic nomads were thus, fairly or unfairly, seen through the prism of stereotypes long-after their military actions against the European states have ended. This idea was that nomadic tribes were, for the most part, anarchic, disorganized and adapted to hardship, forming a hardy society that was prone to rapaciousness and, at times, capable of unspeakable acts of cruelty. It should come as no surprise that these ideas have had an influence in the further development of the European humanistic sciences and of literature, re-emerging in popular imagination during the romantic period. The popularizing of such stereotypes created an inaccurate image of nomadic societies, the main popular misconception being that Eurasian nomadism was anarchic and characterized by the unrestricted movement of free barbarian tribes.

By exploring these misconceptions and the historical context under which they were formed, this work seeks to correct their inaccuracies and to highlight the role of nomadism in the formation of the Kazakh people and of the Kazakh modern state.

The nineteenth and twentieth centuries came with significant advances in the scientific theories of interpreting the nation. The modernist approach to the topic of nation and national evolution relied heavily on sociology and anthropology so as to theorize and rationalize the formation of the state and to analyze the factors that have created the environment in which the

nation-state became a possibility. As a result, the creation of the nation-states of Europe became the standard model which would be universally-applied by the involved sector of academia. One of the results of this approach would be the tendency of understanding non-European societal evolution on the basis of the European model, as well as filling the gaps in our understanding of history by envisioning pre-national European evolution through the lenses of non-European societal development.

This idea would lead to the consensus in social science that the state, as the advanced form of administrative rule, required centralization in order to exist, creating a dichotomy with the non-state (and thus acephalous) entities, whose mechanism of internal organization relied on tribal kinship. Given the antithesis, acephalous societies were regarded as primitive. It is to be observed that the notion of primitive societies was, in many ways, tied to the imperialistic views or political trends of the time which incorporated it in their ideological approach to society.

In the case of Central Asian nomadism, both the followers of the anthropologic segmentary tribal model, as well as the proponents of Marxism downplayed the role that class has had in the formation of the local political system, at least in the early assessments of Central and Inner Asian societies. That has much to do with the presumption that primitive society is feebly organized and its needs revolve around the basic, thus envisioning a world in which steppe nomadism was, more or less, a cycle of wandering from pasture to pasture, restricted only by the occasional outbreak of conflict between territorially-competing groups or disrupted by calamities of either natural or anthropic origin.

The other modernist approaches did not differ greatly in this trend, with sociologists like Durkheim considering clanship and tribalism as one of the stages of evolution to a more intricate politico-administrative system. By analyzing his concepts in regards to primitive society and its evolution, we can deduce that Durkheim essentially sees the clan as one of the earlier stages in the formation of a collective consciousness, and a precursor to modern society.

So, what is the source of the scientific misconception of Central-Asian nomadism? Well, as we have explored throughout this subchapter, the greatest misunderstanding stems from the methodology employed by the modernist approach to nation and nation-building. It is impossible to recreate the formation of identity among the Eurasian nomads without employing

the tools that the modernist theses have created, but their wholesale employment would create a large number of inaccuracies, leading to a misconceived theoretical result. And that is because the anthropologic and sociologic sciences that constituted the framework for the creation of the modernist treated their subject of analysis with a thoroughly-objective approach, in the fashion of the exact sciences. Identity, however, is not the exclusive result of hazard, and bears with it a resounding subjectivity. The nation, as an extensive evolution of greater identity, has its roots partly in the hazard that modernists have tried to rationalize, as well as in the individual subjectivity of those that have enabled it to take form.

When it comes to the form of organization witnessed among Central Asian nomads, sources give different accounts based on the nature of the interaction. Those that faced or recounted actions of violence perpetrated by the peoples of the steppe generally tend to portray them as prone to war, therefore assuming that their society of origin is specialized in warfare. On the other hand, the sources that have had a more direct contact with the civilian aspect of steppe society paint a rather different image, portraying a stratified society that was capable-enough to develop and maintain various institutions – some specific, others general.

The Kazakhs, as one of the evolving identity groups within the ever-changing ethnolinguistic horizons of the peoples of Central and Inner Asia, have continued a pattern of socioeconomic evolution developed and perfected throughout millennia of pastoral nomadism. Within this timespan changes have occurred, particularly so in regards to the native culture of the region, but aside from the innovations that may have facilitated to various degrees the processes behind the phenomenon of pastoralism, it essentially remained the same.

Within pastoral nomadic societies, manoralism was absent given the wide impracticability of permanent settlement. *Obogs*, however, were under the jurisdiction of aristocratic dynasties, with the ruling noblemen being involved in the judiciary and decision-making processes of their charge. Although highly mobile, nomads nevertheless depended on pastureland for raising livestock which resulted in taxation as land use was regulated by the judicial authority and martially enforced through customary law.

The vertical power dynamic in nomadic societies did not inhibit social mobility to the same extend observed in its agrarian counterpart. One example is the practice of exogamy, which

saw women leaving their original *obog* by means of marriage, thus passing from one authority to another. Similarly, although not practiced universally among the different nomadic groups through time, freemen were not irrevocably bound to a certain lord, yet constraint of movement was enforced in periods of higher centralization of power.

Related to the formation of the Kazakh identity, the problem is not the implausibility of these theories, but rather the plausibility of all proposed origins or the ethnonym. And that is because, in all likelihood, the Kazakh ethnonym distinguishes itself by not denoting a possible *obog*, unlike its constituent clans or part of its surrounding identity groups (state or non-state). At the same time, one cannot completely rule out the possibility that the ethnonym may be linked to a founding member.

The history of the Kazakh state begins as a tale of rebellion, which may explain understanding the ethnonym through the prism of political flight. That segment of the Uzbek Khanate which took the path of self-exile prior to the establishment may likely be the catalyst which led to the creation of a nation-defining term, as justified by the usage of the term in relation to those that do not recognize one's authority. This would rather translate the term *Kazakh* as "unseated-folk" for which wandering was a means of preserving their interest. And, in the case of the Kazakh people, the notion remained attached to their identity and perceived similarly both from the outside, as well as from the inside.

Access to education and the higher economic possibilities of the declining Kazakh aristocracy increased social cohesion as graduates of Russian eventually assumed the political position of their father. In most cases, education was pursued out of practicality, with Kazakh local officials being aware that the ability to speak Russian would eventually tie their children to remunerated offices. Access to a European-styled higher education on Russian territory (concentrated in the Orenburg and Volga regions) stimulated the creation of a Kazakh intelligentsia within the upper layers of society. Personalities such as Shoqan Walikhanov or Abay Kunanbaiuly were formed in this period, their literary works contributing to the development of the Kazakh national sentiment. Such education managed to create a thin, but nevertheless important echelon of secular elites. In turn, such graduates contributed to the secularization of education in Kazakh territories. Conservative nationalists and pan-Turkists actively played a role in the propagation of the rebellion as the religious elite urged the

participation of the Muslim Kazakhs in a "holy war" against the Christian Russians. Progressive nationalists (such as Bukeikhanov of the Alash Orda) initially sought to strike a compromise with the imperial regime, but Russian reluctance to support any form of agreement with the Kazakhs succeeded in alienating even the typically western-minded secular elite.

Nationalism in Kazakhstan and the nation-building process continue to be marked by the traditional division formed on economic and ideological leanings: North vs. South; Secular vs. conservative; Progressive vs. traditionalist. The *status-quo* is maintained through the unanimous acceptance of a common ethnicity and culture within the native population, but divergences occur whenever social policies are put into discussion, or whenever a community perceives a threat to its well-established way of life. Aside from contending with its precarious geographic position and with potential bouts of separatism within the minority groups, Kazakhstan must balance the needs and wishes of the native population in such a way so as to not upset the equilibrium between its progressive and the conservative segments.

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