

Historical aspects of the formation of the Russian mentality

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Abstract. This paper examines the legal mentality as an element of the structure of legal consciousness, as well as its characteristic expressions. It also pays attention to the historical factors that influenced the formation of the Russian mentality, due to the adoption of Christianity in Russia. A comparative analysis of the impact of this concept in different periods of formation and development of the Russian state is conducted. Russian law has rather deep roots going back to the history of ancient Russian society. Since the content of law is reflected in legal ideas, in this regard, it is advisable to study Russian law from a deep and comprehensive study of the legal mentality of Russian society.

1 Introduction

The key factor influencing the culture of a country is the mentality of the bearers of that culture that has evolved over the centuries.

Meanwhile, culture is a complex conglomerate, the defining element of which is the system of values of the individual and society as a whole [1].

Mentality (from Latin *mentalis* – ‘mental’, ‘spiritual’, ‘psychic’) – is the spiritual appearance, the way of thinking, a set of psychological and behavioral attitudes that determine the originality and identity of the worldview and the people's lifestyle of a given culture. According to P.S. Gurevich, “mentality (or mindset) is a relative integrity of thoughts, beliefs, skills of spirit, which creates a picture of the world and consolidates the unity of a cultural tradition or any community” [2].

According to the concept of ethnogenesis of the Russian historian and ethnographer L.N. Gumilev, mentality is formed during ethnogenesis – the process of emergence and development of ethnicity, occurring also under the influence of ethnic contacts. Mentality is an essential part of ethnic tradition and is a hierarchy of ideas, views, perceptions of the world, evaluations, tastes, cultural canons, ways of expression of thought, characteristic of a particular ethnic culture. The specificity of mentality is most obvious at the level of super-ethnic integrity – a system consisting of several ethnic groups. “In a super-ethnic system, where there is a diversity of stereotypes of behavior, mentality is the main consolidating factor. Thus, the extremely diverse Byzantine super-ethnos was united by Orthodoxy (not only as a religion, but also as a mentality), as was the Russian super-ethnos, which emerged much later. The West, once called the ‘Christian world,’ is now united in ‘civilization’ and ‘progress,’ which corresponds to the mental image of modern Western man...” [3].

2 Materials and Methods

In this regard, the process of formation of the Russian law begins with the formation of the Russian state. As law and society develop, so does the legal consciousness, legal culture, and legal mentality. So, the latter is a kind of complex formation including legal ideology and legal psychology.

Accordingly, this term refers to a set of habits and beliefs, a way of thinking typical for a particular community. Mentality is easier to be described by some key concepts than by a clear definition.

Mentality is characterized as such by the peculiarities of the mental complex and worldview of the people who are part of a particular ethnic entity. As a complex phenomenon, it is reflected in all elements of the structure of legal consciousness and is revealed in the specifics of legal understanding, feeling of law and jurisprudence. Characteristic expressions of the legal mentality of a particular society are the legal worldview, legal idealism, and legal nihilism [4]. The legal mentality provides the basis for the formation and manifestation of legal consciousness, legal worldview, and legal thinking.

The Russian national character has developed over the centuries, influenced by many factors. Some of these are most obvious: the influence of Christianity and Byzantine culture, the growth of the Russian state and interaction with other ethnic groups, and Russia's intermediate position between Europe and Asia. It all comes down to religion, history, and geography in the end.

The emergence of the first views of cultural character in Russia is associated with Kievan Rus as the first state of the Eastern Slavs, the introduction of writing, as well as the adoption of Christianity, which came to Russia from Byzantium in the Orthodox form, occurred in 989. The fact that Byzantinism predetermined the “Eastern” priorities in the historical choice of Russia's path of

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development and its immanent opposition to the West was also mentioned by N. Berdyaev in his article devoted to Leontiev: "Russia in all its peculiarity and greatness is held by Byzantine Orthodoxy and autocracy, by objective church and state ideas, not by a national bond, not by Russian national self-determination. These beginnings formed Russia into a great and peculiar world - the world of the East, as contrasted with the West." [5]

The most distinctive feature of the Russian mentality, noted by various philosophers, is religiosity. The process of the formation of the Russian identity and the Russian mentality covered the period from the time of the Christianization of Russia and lasted until the era of John IV.

At this time, the Orthodox-religious basis of national identity was formed and consolidated. Orthodoxy had a great influence on the formation of the Russian mentality. The religion adopted by Russia in its Greco-Byzantine form had no effect on the inner nature of Russian man, but, on the contrary, received quite developed rudiments of a unified spiritual and moral worldview. The combination of religiously orthodox and spiritually moral components also formed a unique Russian ethnos and Russian spirituality, the Russian mentality. Orthodoxy significantly determined the individual configuration of the Russian mentality and several fundamental ideas in the Russian consciousness: the ideas of justice, communal spirit, communism, strong statehood, and common cause.

In the era of the nobility, the attachment to religion united Russian peasants and aristocrats. However, according to some scholars, Christianity covered the Pagan culture because divination, ritual games, predictions of the future, and dream interpretations were popular in the Russian provincial aristocracy's social circles. The main event, which had a forceful impact on the social and economic life of the country, was the abolition of serfdom.

All estates during this period were divided into privileged and unprivileged, the latter included the Cossacks.

The Cossacks represent one of the manifestations of the Russian state and people's life. The first mention of the Cossacks appeared in the XIV century. The Cossacks are an ethnic group, a class within the Russian people.

The Cossack was both a colonizer of the suburbs of the state and a guardian of its borders, a defender of the Russian nationality, a fighter for orthodoxy, and a creator of the most original forms of folk life. In this multifaceted role of the Cossacks, there lies their historical power and importance: the Cossacks developed hand in hand with the development of the Russian state.

Initially, the Cossacks were divided into free Cossacks, who had to flee because of persecution by the state, and the "sovereign" Cossacks. To subdue the Cossacks and prevent their unpredictable actions, the state singled them out as a separate estate. The Cossacks were in the service of the state. Eight Cossack regions were created for the defense of the state. Also, the State endowed the Cossacks with land, but only if they served the government. The Army Cossacks lived for the sake

of service, for the sake of war. Typically, his family was a stanitsa or khutor community, and his home was a regiment or outpost on the border (stanitsa or khutor is a type of Cossack village). The Army Cossacks, according to the Russian authorities, were born to fight and, if necessary, to die. That was the only reason they didn't pay some imperial taxes, had their own common land, laws, and were allowed to maintain self-government. And the Cossacks themselves were aware of this – but in this way they enabled the life of a Cossack to their stanitsa people and their children. Therefore, the Cossack had a simpler attitude toward death and life itself. In this way, he paid for the right to be called a Cossack. This forced him, whether single or with many children, old or young, rich, or poor, to leave their settled places and migrate together with their native stanitsa to new and new lands, closer to the danger, where they were told by the government to move. However, there were also those who preferred the harsh Cossack life to the quiet, steady life of a simple merchant or villager and remained in the slobodas (villages) in the Dnieper region or in the places left by the line Cossacks, as representatives of all the peoples of the vast Russian Empire moved there.

Historically, the Cossacks have always been considered a reliable bulwark of Russia, and therefore their troops actively participated in all the wars fought by Russia in the second half of the XIX - early XX centuries.

According to V.N. Ratushnyak, "the Cossacks are a unique sub-ethnic gene pool of the Russian super-ethnos. Despite forced emigration, repression, and attempts to erase its historical memory forever, in the fresh wind of change, Cossacks, like the phoenix, rose from the ashes and were the first in word and deed to express their protest at the beginning of the collapse of traditional Russia. It is unlikely that any estate community corporation, once abolished, would have shown itself in such a way. We do not hear about the mass revival and large-scale actions of such estates as the nobility, merchants, and suburbanites. Apparently, those who believe that the Cossacks as a sub-ethnos of Slavs is not only a special mentality, but also a special state of mind are right" [6].

Thus, we can conclude that the mentality of the Cossacks is a complex phenomenon. The Cossack ethnos was developed from representatives of quite different peoples. The ideas of serving the Motherland had a special place in the formation of the Cossack mentality; the military principle was supported and cultivated throughout the existence of the Cossacks and became one of the components of the class mentality. It is just military service, a military mission was seen by the Cossacks as the main, worthy of a Cossack.

After Russia's transition to a capitalist economy, the events led to the gradual decline and disappearance of the nobility as a social group. One of the reasons for this is the special features of the mentality that prevents modernization, reassessment of old values, etc. [7]

The cultural potential of pre-revolutionary Russia was lost, not only because of the persecution of the clergy and the systematic destruction of remnants of

Christianity in the mentality of the people. The secular culture of Russian society was also lost: the color of the scientific and creative intelligence layer, the traditions of merchants, entrepreneurship, peasant farming, jurisprudence, and public administration.

3 Results and Discussion

Summarizing the impact of the Adoption of Christianity in Russia, it can be noted that within the framework of the Orthodox tradition the Russian mentality was formed, the main features of which in historical retrospect are spirituality, Sobornost (communal spirit) and statehood power.

Regarding the next, a very crucial period in the formation of the Russian mentality, the Soviet period, which still has a significant impact, there have been considerable changes. The Soviet mentality, although containing many all-Russian features, was nevertheless quite different from the pre-revolutionary mentality. The period of socialism led to the formation of a contradictory mentality of the “Soviet man.”

The formation of the Soviet mentality took place in a cultural crisis. The continuity of generations and traditions was broken, which had an impact during the seven decades of building socialism.

A fundamental link in the transition from the Russian mentality to the Soviet mentality was a change in attitude to the religion. It was believed that the adoption of communist ideology led to the overcoming of religious consciousness and the acceptance of atheism. The state policy toward the church varied at different stages of the Soviet history, from attempts at cooperation in the first months after the October Revolution, to suppression and restriction of church activities, to destruction of churches in the 1930s. Initially, the Bolsheviks did not seek conflict with the church, but the Soviet decrees on separation of church from state and school from church as well as the transition to the Gregorian calendar caused Patriarch Tikhon to be condemned. This leads to a conflict that declares the church a defender of the counterrevolution. The Soviet government tried to get some clergy on its side and at the same time sought to eliminate the Moscow Patriarchate. By the end of the 1920s, the Bolsheviks had succeeded in securing a split church and increased the persecution of those who were not willing to cooperate.

The Soviet era did not eliminate all forms of mass religious consciousness, but simply pushed them beyond traditional norms into the area of domestic mysticism. The level of religious culture of the population decreased significantly, as a consequence of which the state ideology replaced the religion.

As a consequence, the country's religious traditions have been lost. A large part of the clergy was either repressed or emigrated. Not only Orthodox Christianity affected this. In the 1930s and 1940s, all peoples were destroyed along with their beliefs, with their temples, rituals, and customs.

The attitude toward the state continued to be ambiguous. The Soviet period was characterized by such

phenomena as the cult of the leader, exaggerating the role of the Party in the public life.

Definitely, the period of the Great Patriotic War of 1941-45 is an important page in the history of the Russian state. At this stage, an important role was played by military-patriotic education, aimed at the formation of social consciousness manifesting itself in relation to its people, its history and culture, to the state and the system of values [8].

However, the Communist ideology put the interests of the collectives above the interests of the individual. The status of a Soviet citizen throughout one's life depended to a large extent on his belonging to certain groups and social formations (October Children, Pioneers). Therefore, with the collapse of the Soviet Union, the usual social patterns began to break down, and individuals sometimes lacked the strength and experience to adapt to the new conditions. They contradicted the beliefs fixed in the minds of several generations, and this led to a crisis of values in Russia. It should also be noted that a great influence in this period was the West, precisely its rationalist mentality.

The changes at the edge of the 80s and 90s did not lead to revolutionary changes in the mentality of the majority of Russians. The very imprint of the Soviet mentality in the consciousness of the Russian man was one of the deepest after the adoption of Christianity in Kievan Russia.

The transition from the Soviet to the Russian mentality began at the end of the last century. Contemporary Russians have a different attitude toward religion and politics than the Soviet people. The Russian Constitution adopted in 1993 guaranteed every citizen the freedom to practice any religion independently or together with others. The level of political awareness of citizens has increased to some extent due to the right to elect and be elected. However, individual interests still dominate over public ones, unlike in the Soviet period.

4 Conclusion

In the twentieth century, the Western world went far ahead in its development. In Russia these days, it is necessary to assimilate a foreign culture and values, sometimes disregarding centuries-old traditions. In this regard, the importance of cultural development of society has always been recognized by the state, and the management of culture in our state acted as an object of legal regulation [9].

The present day emphasizes the close nature of the Russian and Russian mentalities. The Russian mentality is the mentality of the Russian super-ethnos covering all the ethnic groups of Russia, linked by a single historical destiny with the “state-forming” role of the largest Russian ethnic group and the prevalence of moral values of the Orthodox confession. The Russian ethnos is the core of the multi-ethnic Russian society and the state. However, it is also necessary to consider the importance of constant inter-ethnic influences for the formation of the Russian mentality. There are problems and difficulties caused by the peculiarities of intercultural

dialogue and the norms and values of different cultures in multinational circles [10].

Some researchers define the Russian mentality as “Eurasian”.

It can be said that Russian society is characterized by a negative attitude toward the law. Legal nihilism characterizes the Russian society, for a historically long time, as denying the law and unwilling to follow the general principles and goals of law. The main reasons for this are as follows: an excessive focus on foreign political and legal experience to the detriment of domestic experience; the distraction and failure to consider the features, potential, and limitations of national legal consciousness and legal culture in the formation of a system of legal regulation; the stagnant nature of ongoing reforms.

The Russian legal consciousness is organically inherent in etatism, as evidenced by the entire history of Russia. An excessive focus on the state power is a characteristic feature of the domestic mentality, showing its difference from the Western social worldview. Analyzing the peculiarities of the ethical psychology of the Russian legal consciousness, it is important to note the specifics of the relationship between the state and the individuals in Russia. Formally, this relationship is equal, fair, and mutually beneficial. In fact, our history is evidence that the individual has always been secondary to state power. Here it is obvious, the complete subordination of the individual to the state, and at the time of public indignation – violent lawlessness, defeated by an even more savage state arbitrariness [11].

The particularity of the Russian mentality is also manifested in its interaction with the legal culture of society, in the characteristic image of the perception of legal values. The mentality of the Russian legal system cannot be outside the sphere of legal culture because it ensures the integrity of the latter. And the studies of legal responsibility and legal culture have led to the conclusion about the close interaction of these categories and the need for the lawmakers to consider this relationship in the implementation of their law-making powers [12]. At the same time, the legal view distances itself from legal culture, from its universal values and principles. And this is not surprising, since their essence lies in non-traditional forms of the legal perception for the Russian society: natural human rights and freedoms, their inalienability, the autonomy of the individual, the primacy of law over the state, etc.

Contemporary Russian legal consciousness is in a condition of crisis, in the process of searching for new legal-axiological attitudes. It is life that forces a certain analysis of legal values that do not meet the requirements and demands of contemporary social practice. This reinforced the traditional psychological ambivalence of the Russian worldview.

The axiological characteristic of the Russian worldview is characterized by irrationality, illogic, impulsiveness, suggestibility, naive idealism, the desire for justice and tolerance combined with cruelty and lack of restraint, as well as a close connection with religious values, etc.

The value of legal norms as the primary regulators of

social relations that organize society is indisputable. A disciplined society and a society with a developed legal order are identical concepts. And now, Russia is not experiencing a shortage of legal norms, but a lack of their coherence and competent implementation. But all attempts to overcome this deficit are fruitless without a proper guarantee from the state for their implementation and proper legal education of the country's population. During the existence of the Soviet state, much attention was paid to legal propaganda (although it was formal and ideological in nature, but there were practical benefits). In today's reality, however, legal propaganda is not so much an educational tool as a political discussion one. However, without proper legal education of the population, it is impossible to form a high level of legal consciousness, which, as a result, is a necessary condition for the formation of a civil society and the rule of law proclaimed in the Constitution of the Russian Federation.

The contemporary Russian legal consciousness is characterized not only by political and legal populism, but also by an eclecticism of ideas, views, concepts, and ideas. It is characterized by inconsistency of economic, political, legal, and other views, and a combination of incompatible mentality schemes. So far, the society has not understood the goals and directions of state-building. The authorities do not give a coherent, clear answer to this question, which further increases the distrust of the authorities. There is an obvious need to look for new institutional forms that would help make legal mechanisms in Russia more effective and make it as difficult as possible for the state to violate human rights uncontrollably. All of this can lead to positive shifts in legal consciousness and, ultimately, improve the Russian legal mentality.

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