

Conference Paper

The Role of Ethnic Non-Material Property for Intercultural Communications in Digital Society

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Abstract

This paper is devoted to the intellectual property and spiritual (non-material and non-intellectual) property of ethnic minorities. The research is topical, because ethnic identity issues remain prevalent in the modern era, and questions of ethnic identity have become problematic and multifaceted due to the crisis of multiculturalism concepts and the ‘glocalization’ processes. Many languages of ethnic minorities are under the threat of disappearance. The main objective of this research is to define the role of Mother Language and ethnic non-material property for self-identification of different nationalities in digital society. The secondary objective is to consider what kind of non-material property is the most important in this context. Research methods to be used: methodology of system differentiation of Luhmann N. It is asserted in this work, that the main non-material property for ethnic minorities is intellectual property and spiritual (non-material and non-intellectual) property. Spiritual property is considered here from the non-religious point of view, mainly because of the author’s world-outlook. Another reason is that religious type of spiritual property is ideologically burdened in modern Russia. Non-religious spiritual property is of great importance for ethnic minorities, nevertheless it is under-estimated. Mother Language is a base for ethnic spiritual property. In contrast, religious spiritual property is conservative and backward similar to mental reservation (from the author’s point of view).

Keywords: non-material property, intellectual property, ethnic minorities, intercultural communication, digital society.

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1. Introduction

The problem of the role of an ethnic non-material property for ethnic identity in digital society is important because it has different aspects: historical, philosophical, sociological, etc. It is important for Cultural studies and also for Social anthropology. Ethnic identity issues became complex, because multiculturalism concept became problematic.

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A religious spirituality often makes some believers to counteract with some believers from another confession [5]. But this paper is devoted to irreligious approach to spirituality.

The research has several goals, but the main objective of the paper is the research of important role of an ethnic non-material property for identification and self-identification in the intercultural communications in digital society. To achieve this desired goal it is necessary to analyze different kinds of non-material property and to find out the main kind of non-material property in this context.

The notion of “property” was studied for ages from Plato, Aristotle and Roman practitioners in the field of proprietary relations. This notion is too wide. So it’s necessary to narrow the field of research and to avoid long history of “material property” researches.

The notion of “spiritual property” (as “non-material property”) was invented by Hegel in his “Philosophy of Law” [2].

In my candidate thesis (defended in 1998, Ural State University, Yekaterinburg, Russia) and in my Dissertation for Doctor of philosophical sciences degree (2009, at the same place), I determined term “Spiritual property” from the point of view of philosophy of social science.

Spiritual property may be (from irreligious point of view) philosophically considered as a kind of non-material property characterizing unique form of individual intellectual’s (or of creative collective’s) objective expression of their own spiritual values (of cultural wealth) [7].

Both, the candidate thesis and Dissertation for Doctor of philosophical sciences degree gave detailed literature survey.

The term of spiritual property is used in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (Articles 11–31). For example, see Article 11:

“... 2. States shall provide redress through effective mechanisms, which may include restitution, developed in conjunction with indigenous peoples, with respect to their cultural, intellectual, religious and spiritual property taken without their free, prior and informed consent or in violation of their laws, traditions and customs” [19].

Hypotheses: Mother Language is a base for ethnic spiritual property.

2. Methodology and Methods

This research used some elements of case-study method. But mainly, the research was conducted on a base of methodology of system differentiation of Niklas Luhmann. After Gregory Bateson, Luhmann often used the following definition of information:

“Information is a difference changing system’s condition, i.e., difference which makes difference” [9, p.7].

Modification of Luhmann’s method permits to put into practice new a definition of spiritual property. The new definition is given in this social-theoretical handling.

So, spiritual property may be defined as non-material property on a spiritual difference changing spirituality’s condition. Every ethnic minority should have the moral right to own spiritual property. Spiritual property is a kind of base for self-identification in the intercultural communications.

These social-theoretical generalizations are in some aspects similar to a kind of “property rights in logos”. Neil Schulman prefers the philosophical term of “Logorights” on epistemological and metaphysical basis of “Logos”.

“The logos in this work are its material identity, an ‘information object,’ separate from the materials upon which it may be imposed or observed, which has been created as a unique structured artifact by its author’s labors. Since each artifact resulting from the labor of a person is, by natural right, by decency, and by common law, beyond all limitations imposed by sovereign force, the morally claimable property of that being, each use of that property must be authorized by its owner, and all unauthorized uses of it are trespasses of a person’s natural rights and a violation of that person’s spirit. The logo right notice is an explicit marking of that object to declare to all that it is owned” [12].

3. Results and Discussion

Ethnic spiritual property is formed on a base of Mother Language.

Cultural anthropology determines a language as “a symbolic system of sounds that, when put together according to a certain set of rules, conveys meanings to its speakers” [1, p.104]. The 21st of February is International Mother Language Day since 1999-2000, when UNESCO General Conference approved it.

“UNESCO believes in the importance of cultural and linguistic diversity for sustainable societies. It is within its mandate for peace that it works to preserve the differences in

cultures and languages that foster tolerance and respect for others. Linguistic diversity is increasingly threatened as more and more languages disappear. Globally 40 per cent of the population does not have access to education in a language they speak or understand. Nevertheless, progress is being made in mother tongue-based multilingual education with growing understanding of its importance, particularly in early schooling, and more commitment to its development in public life. Multilingual and multicultural societies exist through their languages which transmit and preserve traditional knowledge and cultures in a sustainable way” [3].

Many ethnic minorities in India really try to defend their own spiritual property, their Mother Language and their intellectual property [16].

In the information society identity and ethnicity are often under pressure of Americanization. Many continental European nations manage to preserve their Mother Language even in unified European system of higher education. Some Russian higher education institutions are discussing the European system of higher education, for example, in Udmurtia [4]. But the number one challenge in the European Union is migration.

For example, in Italy, “the issue of migration has become a political storm. Rather than with the arrival of new migrants, the problem seems to lie with migrants without a legal status, who came to the country years ago, whose number is 500,000... According to INPS, the Italian social welfare institution, due to declining birth rate and population ageing, without migrants the pension system is bound to collapse” [10, p.348]. And here arises another challenge. Is it possible for native Italians to maintain Italian spiritual property?

Some ethnic minorities in Russia really try to defend their own spiritual property and their Mother Language. For example, for several decades (almost a century) Siberian Tatar language was under pressure of Kazan Tatar language, because Kazan Tatar language was maintained by the Soviet and Russian authorities as a literary language for all Tatars. Nevertheless, Siberian Tatar language survived as ‘individual’, it got ISO 639-3 Code as of Living Language Type [14]. Siberian Tatar language is used at some Groups in Facebook [13].

As to Udmurtia, the case of Mother Language’s defense may be considered on the example of Udmurt language. The case of Albert Razing, former member of the Union of scientists of Udmurt Republic was discussed in Russian social media by many users of different nationalities, especially in Udmurt and Tatar.

The case was the following. On the 10th of September, 2019, Razin burned himself in front of the state Council building of the Udmurt Republic. As a matter of fact, it was suicide. Strictly speaking, suicides happen rather often in Finnish-Ugric republics of

Russia (and abroad, in Finland and Hungary also). But self-burning is extremely rare here because of some cultural and religious traditions (the most of Udmurts are baptized).

Actually, I am not an Udmurt, but I knew Razin personally, because we worked together for several years [11], and his suicide was unexpected and extremely shocking. He was a candidate of philosophical science and we discussed some philosophical issues of ethnic culture etc. He burned himself to death to protest the disappearance of indigenous languages and Udmurt culture.

That day, Razin held up two large cardboard signs. One read “And if my language disappears tomorrow, then I remain prepared to die today” (it is part of translation of the poem of Soviet poet Rasul Gamzatov). The other asked, “Do I have a Homeland?” [17]. Some reporters claim: “the regional government of Udmurtia has been doing its best to act as though his final act of protest never happened” [17]. I can’t agree with it.

For instance, Buranova L., the minister of national policy of Udmurt Republic, commented his suicide. In her interview for regional TV she told, that Razin and she couldn’t agree in discussions of future trends of Udmurt culture. Razin insisted on traditional forms of Udmurt culture and previously pagan Udmurt belief (he named it as pantheism).

Actually, young Udmurts tried and try to develop Udmurt culture in modern forms and formats, especially in digital society. For example, the National corpse of Udmurt language (as informational directory assistance system) was created several weeks ago [18].

The statement about language as a treasure may be a good argument for a scholar. But it is not an argument for a programmer or mathematician at all. Strangely enough, many Udmurt programmers, poets and musicians created many groups in Russian social media “vKontakte” in Udmurt language.

Much stranger is the fact, that the total number of such groups in Russian social media “vKontakte” in Udmurt language is more than the number of groups in Tatar or Bashkir language [15]. On the contrary, the total number of Tatars or Bashkirs is much more than the number of Udmurts in Russia.

Indeed, many ethnic minorities in modern Russia (Tatars or Bashkirs, or Udmurts, etc.) created many interesting poems, songs, dances, etc. during last 30 years. Most of them are accessible on CD, DVD, or on-line.

The development of digital society forms a base for some fractal (self-similar) traits of Non-material (Spiritual) property. As to Fractal approach, it was founded by Benoit Mandelbrot. Fractal is mathematical term for different objects with self-similarity conditions. Parts of the fractal are similar to the whole fractal [6]. The structure of spiritual property

distributed at Web-sources is fractal-like. It may cause system multifractal synergetic effects.

4. Conclusions

The national spiritual heritage is a base for relations and development of spiritual property [5]. Meta-national integration is one of the main factors of the globalization process. And spiritual property is one of the main factors of the localization process. Both are connected in a modern “glocalization” processes.

The concept of spiritual property is wider than Schulman’s concept of Logo right, because spiritual property manifests not only rational (logic) aspects, but irrational aspects also. Indeed, spiritual property may manifest religious or aesthetic aspects.

Thus, Mother Language and spiritual property are the main factors and kinds of ethnic non-material property in digital society. And the prospect of fractal approach to the spiritual property in digital society may be multifractal.

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