

**INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION
ON THE FRONTIER AND BEYOND FRONTIER
(comparative analysis)**

Romanova Anna P., D.Sc. (Philosophy), Professor

Astrakhan State University
20a Tatishchev st., Astrakhan, 414056, Russia
E-mail: arromanova_mail@mail.ru

Topchiev Mikhail S., Ph.D. (Political Sciences), Leading Specialist

Astrakhan State University
20a Tatischev st., Astrakhan, 414056, Russia
E-mail: dc_mail@bk.ru

Саракаева Элина А., Ph.D. (Philology), Associate Professor

Hainan State University
58 Zhenmin st., Haikou, Meilanqu District, 570100, China, Hainan Province

Systems of intercultural communications depend on many factors, e.g. the history of the cultural landscape formation in the area of communication. On frontier areas the specificity of communication lies both in the mobility of borders and the special position of the Other/Stranger in a multicultural society. It is generally a little different than on non-frontier areas. Thus different systems of cultural safety were formed in different local cultural landscapes. The article presents a comparative analysis of the current nature of intercultural communication through the prism of the relationship with a Stranger in the capital of the Russian Federation and in the southern Russian frontier, Astrakhan City. The article shows how a traditional, historically evolved system of relations with other ethnic groups shapes the most tolerant forms of intercultural communication in order to avoid open conflicts.

Keywords: frontier, cultural safety, cultural security, stranger, intercultural communications, cultural landscape, saving, protection, xenophobia

**МЕЖКУЛЬТУРНЫЕ КОММУНИКАЦИИ
НА ФРОНТИРЕ И ВНЕ ФРОНТИРА
(сравнительный анализ)¹**

Романова Анна Петровна, доктор философских наук, профессор

Астраханский государственный университет
414056, Россия, г. Астрахань, ул. Татищева, 20а
E-mail: arromanova_mail@mail.ru

Топчиев Михаил Сергеевич, кандидат политических наук, ведущий специалист

Астраханский государственный университет
414056, Россия, г. Астрахань, ул. Татищева, 20а
E-mail: dc_mail@bk.ru

Саракаева Элина Алиевна, кандидат филологических наук, доцент

Хайнаньский государственный университет
570100, Китай, провинция Хайнань, г. Хайкоу, Мэйланцю, просп. Жэнминь, 58

Система межкультурных коммуникаций зависит от многих факторов, в том числе и от истории формирования культурного ландшафта территории, на которой идет процесс межкультурных коммуникаций. На фронтальных территориях специфика системы общения была

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обусловлена как подвижностью границ, так и особым положением Другого/Чужого в поликультурном обществе. Она была несколько иной, нежели на не фронтальных территориях. В связи с этим формировались и различные системы культурной безопасности, связанные с локальным культурным ландшафтом. В статье проводится сравнительный анализ современного характера межкультурных коммуникаций через призму взаимоотношения с Чужим в столице Российской Федерации и на южнороссийском фронтире, в Астрахани. В статье показано, как традиционно исторически сложившаяся система взаимоотношений с другими этносами создает наиболее максимально толерантные формы межкультурных коммуникаций во избежание открытых конфликтов.

Ключевые слова: фронтир, культурная безопасность, чужой, межкультурные коммуникации, культурный ландшафт, сохранение, защита, ксенофобия

At the end of the twentieth century under the influence of a number of factors, such as: globalization, economic crises, local wars, increased migration – we can witness the change of the cultural landscape, leading, respectively, to the change of the system of intercultural communication.

Only 20 years ago the main objective of the system of intercultural communication was to establish an understanding between people of different countries, but now the focus has shifted to representatives of different cultures living together in "close proximity".

One of the main figures of intercultural communication has always been The Alien. These figures are actually based on the inner intentions of the actors of communication to understand it. However mysterious and dangerous the Alien seems to us, it is an essential element of social development, our mirror, a marker of our identity.

Globalization processes change not the very figure of the Alien but rather its status and our perception. It becomes a phenomenon of our everyday culture. But this does not make it closer and clearer, and the process of intercultural communication is not simplified. We no longer see it as something abstract and distant, it becomes a specific irritant, and the need for a permanent cross-cultural communication makes us build a system of cultural security.

The concept of cultural safety arose in the 80 years of the twentieth century, when there came awareness of the fact intervention in the foreign culture has devastating and irreparable consequences.

To a certain extent this happens under the influence of changes in the status of the Alien.

Until the twentieth century security has traditionally been seen as a military-political, physical-corporeal, distributive force. A number of Russian researchers still identify it with the state and national security from military threats. The spectrum of security definitions is wide enough: ranging from the "status" (existence without threat, stability, security, free choice) to "human activity". Thus, the term refers to a very broad level of objects and phenomena, acquiring ontological character.

However, we must remember that the concept of "security", as well as its alternative "insecurity" are merely social constructs. Our concept of security varies according to the circumstances we face. Each generation and each community needs a new explanation of security depending on the threats it deals with. And every time we meet the question of whom and of what we are supposed to seek protection. By introduction of the term "cultural security" to the scientific use, the society tries to answer at least some of the questions.

Originally, this concept was formulated as a cultural safety in the eighties of the twentieth century.

It appeared while rendering nursing and midwifery services for the Maori people in New Zealand, when it became clear that this activity is not possible without taking into account traditions and customs of the people receiving medical care.

Cultural safety at that time was understood as an activity which supports, inspires confidence and respect for the cultural identity and prosperity of individuals, giving them the opportunity to express their identity and meeting their cultural needs. Such a concept of cultural safety included as a mandatory element an elaborate system of cross-cultural communications [4, p. 11].

Later in the nineties, due to the changes in the social situation, the problem of cultural safety has grown beyond semi-medical problematic, and there appeared one more term-«*cultural security*» [5 ; 6 ; 14].

Both terms «safety» and «security» are used interchangeably and denote security. But the term «security» has a more formalized legal and political denotation –it means protection, maintenance, guarantee and defense. In fact, the change in terminology from the «safety» for «security» says a lot. Now it is deemed necessary not only to maintain but also to protect. The question arises "protect from whom?" The first answer that suggests itself - from "the Alien".

The figure of the Alien has been present in our world outlook since ancient times. In our view of Alien we focus on the features that distinguish it from the others. These are his appearance (height, skin color, eye shape), language, alimentary and sexual culture, clothing. And the ratio of these characteristics is largely dependent on the socio-political situation and the cultural landscape. Most often the Alien has been seen as a negative figure, so his otherness was hypertrophied. However, each culture built up its own image of the Alien, and, respectively its own system of cross-cultural communication. In Russian cultural landscape this process had its own peculiarities.

In the twentieth century Russia with her dominant Slavic population was a *polycultural* country. However, this polyculturalism was totally different from the modern European multiculturalism. Basically, every ethnic group in the Soviet Union, from the time of tsarist Russia, had their autochthonous territory, i.e. considered themselves a fundamental part of the cultural landscape. The official state position in relation to other ethnic groups was aimed at smoothing the differences with the official support of cultural identity.

At this time, the binary natured concept "Own" – "Alien" was being actively redefined. The border was primarily ideological. The country was declared a new historical community - the Soviet people, a figure which was originally excluded from the Alien's inner cultural context. All cultures were "Ours", while maintaining diversity. The mediator of intercultural communication was Russian as the official language. Local ethnic conflicts in the USSR were not let known to public.

Such a spiritual community was emphasized by the general cultural atmosphere. Among the iconic figures of the USSR there were many people of different nationalities: Chingiz Aitmatov, R. Gamzatov, D. Banionis, R. Pauls, M. Liepa, B. Okudzhava, M. Magomaev, O.Ioseliani, A. Dzhigarkhanyan and others/ The best Soviet films emphasized positive aspects of multi-ethnicity (e.g. "The Swineherd and the Shepherd", "Mimino", "Father of a Soldier", "White Sun of the Desert" etc.) Opinion polls of different nationalities in the Soviet era show that they really perceive all Soviet people as "friends" at the level of everyday culture, and that cross-cultural communication in the country was not difficult [10].

For the Soviet people the Alien was first of all, a foreigner, a representative of the capitalist camp, of hostile ideological orientation, a potential enemy. Communist foreigners yet fell into the category of "Ours" (Marx, Engels, Dolores Ibaruri, Pamir Togliatti, etc.). However, a compatriot, a member of the Communist Party became Alien when, for whatever ideological reasons, he fell into the category of "enemies of the people" and so was destroyed.

The archaic archetype of the Alien with all its demonic character can be traced in a number of conflict situations involving forced deportation to Central Asia and the Urals of a number of peoples (Chechens, Ingush, Crimean Tatars, Kalmyks, Balkar, Volga Germans, etc.) in the late 30's - early 40 's of the twentieth century.

From distant representative of the fraternal family of peoples the deported turned into near-Alien who were labeled by Soviet propaganda as traitors and enemies of the people. According to the memoirs of the survivors, the local population not simply met them with hostility due to indoctrination –they even demonized the deportees' images. The deported Crimean Tatars remember the local population imagined them as horned, tailed one-eyed or three-eyed cannibals who ate children.

"In Churtan village a crowd gathered at the river bank. They were told that three-eyed Tartars were coming" [1].

"When we were brought there, there was no one in the streets: the locals hid in their houses, as they were told that one-eyed people were to be brought" [18].

"Locals were cautious of us at first, it turned out that before our arrival they had been told that we were child-devouring folks with one eye on the forehead" [20].

In these descriptions we can find all the classic signs of the Alien - "devouring alimentary culture" and infernal appearance. Deported peoples were presented to the local population by ideological propaganda not merely as traitors, but as monsters, the archaic archetype of the Alien was used. However, in most cases, this impression was short-lived, sometimes disappeared at the first encounter face to face. And ordinary people treated these Aliens more kindly than the government. Intercultural communication in this case went primarily through the study of the Russian and local languages. It was very important for the locals that the newcomers could learn their language; it helped a lot in the implementation of cross-cultural communications and transferring new-comers from the category of the Alien into the category of "Ours" [3].

Those representatives of deported peoples who had mastered the language and could, despite certain legal obstacles, get higher education, were able to break into the elite of the host community [8]. However, for the majority the process of acculturation wasn't completed. Moreover in the 50s, when a process of rehabilitation started and deportees were allowed to return to their homes, the status of the Alien was once again imposed on them, because on returning to their native lands, they were treated with hostility by the people who came to inhabit their former villages [7, p. 294–295]. The capital city of Moscow didn't welcome Slavic -origin migrant workers either, these people were given a derogatory nickname of "limit". Thus, for some state-wide trends we see differences of building relations with the Alien in the context of the local cultural landscape that sometimes changes through political will. At that time, the issue of cultural security lay in the ideological security.

Perestroika and the collapse of the Soviet Union came along with the activation of theoretical understanding of the cultural safety process. Political and economic situation changed in Russia, resulting in increased migration and localization of the Alien figure.

Residents of the former Soviet republics from the category of "Ours" gradually and with difficulty for both sides went into the category of "Others", as they are legally foreigners. Russian language for the younger generation is no longer the language of interethnic communication and is gradually replaced by English. The active migration from the republics of Central Asia and the Caucasus changed the ethnic composition of a number of Russian regions - more and more people of Asian ethnic groups came to stay there, which angered the indigenous people, regardless of their ethnicity. In line with this, not only the perception of the figure of Alien was changed, but also its location in the cultural landscape of Russia. Alien from the external factor becomes a constant inner irritant to the most regions of Russia. However, this process has its own regional identity, which we will try to identify through a comparative analysis of two of the three most attractive regions of Russian migration, Moscow and Astrakhan [9; 17].

We chose these regions also due to their locations on the frontiers. Astrakhan is a classic frontier in the south of Russia, giving new opportunities for social, economic and cultural development. Whereas Moscow is a central, metropolitan, axial area where the frontier has appeared but only recently, due to the newly developed multiculturalism of cultural space [13].

Moscow is the capital metropolis. The share of Russian population there until the end of the twentieth century ranged from 95% in 1912 to 84.82% in 2002. [5] Although representatives of other nationalities settled there for a long time - and even created their own settlement - Tatar, German, etc., but Moscow has always positioned itself as a Russian city in the multi-ethnic country. The first historic mosque built in Moscow in 1823 did not even have a minaret, so as not to embarrass the Orthodox population [2, p. 37].

Over the past 10 years, Moscow has become a multicultural city with a substantial increase in the proportion of the population from the former Soviet republics of Eastern and

Northern Caucasus. Moreover, the official media give different percentage of the Russian population in relation to the bulk of the inhabitants of Moscow from 86.33 % in Census of 2010 to 31 % [12, p. 42].

Astrakhan is a multicultural suburb, with a population of around half a million people, where, in fact, since its inception (1558) there was no indigenous population. In Astrakhan oriental flavor was always present, noticed by all travelers, especially as the share of Russian population in Astrakhan fell from 74.5 % in 1926 to 67.6 % in 2010 [16].

Moscow has always had a high level of xenophobia [11]. Over the past 10 years due to the change in the status of the Alien, the situation was aggravated. Migrant workers in the bygone era had not differed in appearance from the Muscovites, except dialect and level of education. Currently the Alien for Muscovites has become a pronounced representative of Asia – a Tajik, a Caucasian, etc., with low educational qualifications, poor command of the Russian language, a Muslim. Their main forms of activity are construction and cleaning, so they are noticeable throughout Moscow. Although there are no ethnic ghettos in Moscow, there is still a kind of stratification on the basis of rich and poor neighborhoods, regardless of their population density.

In Soviet times, the figure of a Muslim in the national dress was exclusive and was seen as a foreign element, an exotic decoration of the cultural landscape, it was not at all threatening. Nowadays people perceive it as a threat to see huge crowds of Muslims performing namaz on the roadway around Moscow mosques and bringing sacrifices of cattle in yards. In 2010 Chief Imam-Khatib of the Moscow Cathedral Mosque Ildar Alyautdinov publicly stated that if the authorities of Moscow didn't begin the construction of new mosques – the Muslims would pray in Orthodox churches, which caused a heated debate in the press [15]. Naturally, such a form of intercultural communication cries for building a system of cultural security related rather to the protection, than to maintaining. People regard these kinds of statements as a threat, being very far from addressing the problem in a rational way.

Isn't it enough to build more mosques and relocate the congregation and the incident will be settled? The Muslim population of Moscow headed by priests has repeatedly raised the question of increasing the number of mosques and even received a positive response from the government of Moscow, but met resistance from the native Muscovites. Mass protests against the construction of a mosque in the textile workers area in 2010 and Mitino in 2012 forced Moscow authorities to stop the construction. For Muscovites these rallies were essentially the act of providing cultural security. All the more so as during the period of Eid al-Adha Moscow government provided the Muslims with specially equipped rooms for the administration of ritual acts, but they remained almost empty.

In Astrakhan region construction of new mosques or Buddhist monasteries does not cause resistance of the indigenous population. Mosques have long been part of the cultural landscape of Astrakhan. Historical inclusions of the Moorish style into Astrakhan architecture sights and Muslims in traditional clothes were part of the cultural landscape for centuries, making the image of Alien somewhat blurred.

More so as intercultural dialogue in Astrakhan has always been structured in such a way that took into account the specifics of multi-ethnic region. For performing religious rites Astrakhan Muslims go to the right places, and not to the patios of the city central districts. Religious festivals like Eid al-Adha, together with Easter, Spring Carnival, nauryz are celebrated by all multiethnic population. In 2010 we carried out sociological study of the relation to other people and tolerant coexistence, and our data showed that the people of different culture and religion are not perceived by the local youth as Alien. Only 1.5 % of respondents designated representatives of other religions as Alien, 7.6 % thought so of people of different nationalities. Representatives of different social strata (the homeless, the oligarchs, etc.) represent the Alien only for 15.3 %. For most other people Aliens are either foreigners (35.9 %), or the representatives of different sexual orientation (50.4 %). More than half of respondents (59 %) indicated they do not pay attention to the nationality of their friends, and only 22, 9 % have difficulties in the process of intercultural communi-

tion. However, negatively, as Aliens to be avoided, the locals perceive the representatives of Caucasian republics – 43 % of respondents.

Thus, Astrakhan Alien has not so much a distinct ethnic overtone as "landscape" coloring. If it has been historically inscribed in multicultural landscape, it is perceived as "our own". This is reflected even in the designation by the respondents of their nationality as "Russian Kazak" or "Russian Tatar."

So we see that in Russia two scenarios are implemented: «cultural safety» (Astrakhan) and «cultural security» (Moscow). In the latter case, it is a system of preventive measures at all levels of society, strictly guarding the local culture of individuals, families, ethnic groups and the state from the invasion of foreign culture.

However, this way of building a system of cultural security can lead to a set of isolated local cultures within the host culture, and it is absolutely not conducive to the further development of cross-cultural communication. Overcoming the fear of the Alien, the use of existing historical experience of various multicultural areas can contribute to building a new, more flexible system of cultural security, based on the restructuring of the main communication channels and building the Alien into the system not as the object of establishing relationships, but as a full subject of the process, which is possible only with mutual intentions.

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