

Sociological View on “Patriotic” Practices and Interests of the Young People (by Way of Example of Historic Reconstruction)

Albina R. Garifzyanova
Yelabuga Institute of Kazan (Privolzh`ye) Federal University,
Kazanskaya Street 89, Yelabuga, the Republic of Tatarstan, Russia

Abstract: In this study, the researcher makes an attempt to analyze life strategies, cultural interests and practices of a concrete youth group not from a position of subcultural theories but from view that today different representatives of different youth subcultures identify themselves with certain interests and scenes including patriotic ideas. It is the case of the orthodox military-patriotic club “Rus” that used to situate in the territory of the church. This united youth organization never better demonstrates the principal for the study idea such as consolidation of different young people around cultural or scene. In this case-study, the youth group was supported by the representatives of such social institute as church. The basic method was the case-study which implies participant observation in the target environment (during a month in 2012), in this case, it is a matter of the youth solidarity (club). The characteristic feature of the youth association under consideration is the combination of cultural practices and interests from different, as it would seem, spheres: religion, ardour for history, religiousness, patriotic moods and subcultural strategies. Thus, the considered youth scene is not amounted to only one sphere of historical fencing and includes the representatives of nationalist turned youth, people of working profession (endnote 12), devotees of history, sportsmen and also the music scene. Important for consolidation is the co-begin that becomes apparent in senses of value, is displayed in argumentation of choices, practices and interests: it is interest in historical fencing, making armour, blacksmith’s work, sympathy with heathenism, history, music and no doubt, nationalist views, partly anticonsumerism attitude to money, patriarchal views, attitude to the state critical enough, on the one hand but there is sympathy with authority, on the other hand.

Key words: Youth, patriarchal views, case-study, youth subcultures, cultural practices

INTRODUCTION

The study of the youth environment and the youth subcultural formations at the present stage of social development is of special interest. It is connected not only with the fact that the subjects of the young people always attract the state institutes but, on the whole, with the topicality of the youth studies in the light of the current events in the world. The youth studies are connected for many, first of all with the range of problems of the youth space, in other words, the young people are discussed and written in the context of the young people’s problems (Omelchenko, 2004). The informal name of this organization is a club of historical fencing. Sufficient number of works about historical reconstruction has been written by the authors as Khabarov (2006), Tarasov (2014), Zabotkina (2010) and Sobolev (2014) but majority of works are rather journalistic than scientific.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This scientific research analyses the results of the research project “Innovation Potential of the Russian

Youth: Solidarity, Activism, Civic Responsibility”. The basic method was the case-study (Gottlieb, 2002) which implies participant observation in the target environment (during a month in 2012), in this case, it is a matter of the youth solidarity (club). Besides, keeping research diary in the course of “field period” allowed to reconstruct full picture of the youth scene under study. To understand the essence of the studied youth solidarity this methods appears the most appropriate and reasonable. In terms of investigation, it has been conducted 14 semi-structured interviews with the participants of historical reconstruction. In the focus of attention, there was one on which a net of interrelations with other formations and societies got on.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The club “Rus” is located in a basement where is the church forge situated. Before getting into “the forge” (endnote 6), it is necessary to cross almost the whole territory of the church. Generally, all premises are arranged in a circle and in the centre there is not finished foundation pit and dump. The forge is more to the right,

on the side the Church itself is situated. The forge of big area is conditionally divided into three zones: the forge itself (the furnace, the forging hammer and the cast-iron moveable wood stove), in the zone, where tea is drank, the cabinets with equipment, tape recorder are placed and the space where drills and battles are conducted. The basement is not heated but there is electricity. In winter, it is problematic to study here. Traditional practice in the forge is tea drinking and "talking". The tea is regularly boiled and without interruption. The whole forge is filled up with smoke and burning from the cast-iron moveable wood stove. Everywhere in the forge, there are engineering tools and instruments. There are even two trainers and a bar" (From the research journal 13.11.12). The combination of professional space, the forge and informal, the club affects also the atmosphere reigning in the basement: everywhere there are helmets, chain armour, parts of equipment, plates of iron for making sheets for domes, the swords, slugs. From the point of view of possessing resources, in judgment of the participants of other clubs, the club "Rus" has advantages: "for starting positions, I think, if not to take into account the experience and accumulated luggage there and everything then "Rus" has more opportunities. First of all, the workshop has opportunities by order of magnitude greater than the squad "Vityaz'". Here are the furnace and also the tools and plus the very territory as if it urges" (From the interview with the member of the club Vityaz' (Int_13_N Vityaz).

Another practice in the club is trainings that alternate: once physical exercise, learning technological equipment, next time making equipment and preparation for tournaments.

Thus, the studied association unites young people of many different kinds with various interests and practices. The key and public interest which unites different societies is interest in history, hence attention to the historical fencing. There are those who concern themselves with the reconstruction of everyday life of a certain century: these people, for the most part, go to different festivals. The other category being interested in history are those who do not care of correspondence of a costume or armour to reconstructed historical epoch, the interest is formed in the very process of battle. Such guys pay little attention to authenticity of costume: "one of the participants have told that in the city, there are enough clubs but the public image of the Ulianovsk participants fighters is extremely low and we are called according to Nikita, goblins. The reason is a poor costume. These are only the Ulianovsk fighters who can go out with the shields, in the helmet, dressed in the costume with rusty elbow patches and in gymshoes. The gymshoes and using plastic is horrible from his words. It is lousy way to

have such attitude. If you reconstruct, you are to have also the shoes of the corresponding period. He himself has sewed the shoes from leather" (From the research journal 13.11.12).

Among the participants of the historical fencing are those for whom the amour including the process of its creation plays more important role: "interviewer: I got it. Did you want a real costume?

Respondent: Yes, I did, maximum approximate that there should have no such "faugh" then. Because, so called ill fame has been reserved for our city "goblins". Well, they are coming, starting a kind of competition and at once, all are kinda looking at and " faugh, goblins!", they are a sort of pointing the fingers at us that is a poor tendency has formed already and somehow I did not want to become its successor. That is why, gradually. Many criticize me severely for protracted construction. My frame, that I, as a result to competitions why I refused to appear, I assembled it all, I am putting it and I have creases just right here, right here it is hanging and here the way it is. What now? I can't appear in this way indeed? And it all remained there, it was Friday 10 o'clock. I was forced to refuse" (From the interview Int_13_N Vityaz').

The interest in history is also formed from the opportunity to do oneself or by the amour: the guys often because of lack of experience or the opportunity to do "stores" by themselves (endnote 7), appear in the club amours (endnote 8) that is why what armour one has gotten or what is easier to make that period of history is being reconstructed.

However, it is important to note that around the clubs, besides interest in history, often militarized, also "the sporting atmosphere" is formed that is attractive to the people of many different kinds. Historic fencing is one of the sports, even Russian and world championships are held and as any kind of sport, it requires strength and endurance and trainings. "The reconstruction of historical events is, on the one hand, initiated by the government, the municipal officials, on the other hand develops and is supported on the informal and semi-formal basis. There exist also informal historical reconstruction clubs according to interests which have acquired vogue among the youth as a form to spend leisure-time" (Zabotkina, 2010).

The clubs are attractive to both working sportsmen and those who actively took up some kind of sports formerly (endnote 9). Absence of effective mechanisms of socialization of the youth in modern society and possibilities for realization leads, in Zharkov (2007)'s opinion, to that the personality seeks for self-actualization beyond social field, resorting to different types of

risk-taking behavior. In terms of traditional perceiving “male behaviour” as totality of strong and power male traits, the content of which is to be demonstrated then the choice in favour of risk and extreme sports allows to find many points of contact with other organizations and societies. Besides, historical fencing as the space of risk and competitiveness draws people who are not interested obligatory in history, though such people quite a few, they are attracted by the very process of physical “relief”: “beating is firstly physical development, secondly coordination, thirdly I think, each experiences it, such psychological little enjoyment when the hit in the enemy as in shooting to hit the target also means to hit the enemy” (From the interview Int_2_D Rus). Such sphere as sporting often turns out to be the way to satisfy a want for competitiveness being one of the important traits of forming male identity, for which the important constituent is the display of strength, powers of endurance (endnote 10).

One of the key identifying dimensions of the club are patriotic feelings, the history of victories as embodiment of military spirit, xenophobia attitude of mind and nationalist views. Xenophobia attitude of mind is often combined with display of extremality (Gromov, 2007). Xenophobia ideas were expressed by practically all respondents: “interviewer: Who are the wogs?

Respondent: they are not the Caucasian. They are mules and morons descending the mountains. They are the Azerbaijanians and the Chechens because they behave themselves improperly.

Almost all expressed concern over the situation in the country, the love for country how it is to be expressed: “I think one should love the motherland anyway. And love the motherland, not the state. This is different boundary, absolutely different. Because the state, one kind of people and the motherland, the other people. The Motherland is as a constituent part of a soul. Oh, I don’t know, for some people motherland is a place where it is better to live. And my motherland, Russia. Patriotism without nationalism cannot go far. Simply, patriotism is love for motherland, country, not for state, exactly for country, for Russia, for example so that’s how it is and nationalism is love for own nation” (From the interview with informant T. (Int_6_Tilar K)).

In the interview, the respondents often mixed patriotism, xenophobia and healthy life-style. They stressed that one should start with oneself: “If to talk about patriotism then all these “divan expertises” when one is sitting in front of a computer and talking profusely about something, that’s all stuff and nonsense. Patriotism, one should begin with it by oneself. One should improve oneself, perfect oneself, even if don’t throw away in the streets all trash, just look

after oneself” (From the interview with the respondent from the club Vityaz’ (Int_13_N Vityaz). It is difficult to discriminate between these three vectors: patriotism, nationalism and the principles of healthy life-style, they are reciprocally translated and complement each other. The nationalistic moods draw the participants from other united formations and communities, whose ideology is spiritually close to the orthodoxy, patriotism and nationalism (endnote 11): “Nationalism is a pivot for the soul, for oneself. That is, if I identify myself with a Russian nationalist, then well, I have to go in for sport, to quit drinking, smoking, to know the history of my own country, to love my country, to hold women in respect” (The fragment from the interview with T. (Int_10_Tilar 2 K)).

Generally, the ideas of nationalism are closely interwoven with sympathy for heathenism. So, for example, not only one speaks on heathenism but also tattoos: “in addition, he showed the tattoo having been printed on his foot. He told that Vanya got it printed (on his back) and Sanya got the Slavonic symbol printed on his elbow. It is a heathen symbol that reminds swastika. It has 12 endings. He believes in strength of symbol. It increases his confidence, he says. Why is it the heathen symbol? Because that used to be the faith of our ancestors, the orthodoxy was imposed from without” (From the research journal 22.11.12).

The heathenism does not absolutely prohibit the club to be named orthodox patriotic military-historical club “Rus”. It is explained by the fact that the heathenism is originally Russian beliefs, it is the symbol of the past, it is “tribute of respect to our ancestors who fought for bright future”. Here, the sympathy for the heathenism has the notions of a man as a fighter in common: “male, he is a fighter in his predestination in God’s truth, he must defend his family, his land. There are people who can injure in peacetime as well. A man, a male, he is a breadwinner that is there must be a pivot of the fighter. Well, if a man is gentle and sickly-sweet, it will not any results” (From the interview with T. (Int_6_Tilar K)).

Concerning the attitude to the religion, it is extremely discrepant. On one hand, the club is situated on the territory of the church and the chief participant of the club, the leader is an orthodox believer, on the other hand, everybody makes no bone about criticism against church as institute. The other respondents noted that they were not much on the niceties of the church rituals. For them church “is an institute, church is for streamlining all these things that is for the purpose it would be no any divergence and it would be an order, one is to do in this way” (From the interview Int_13_N Vityaz).

The main joining dimension of the youth solidarity is also music (Brown, 2004). From the words of Saimon

Fries, the young people see space in music “to realize their potentials, they resort to it to have support and also for the purpose of relaxing but most of all they are interested in musical “artistic aspects” complexity of musical construct or deep textual poetry” (Frith, 1983). In the traditional style, musical preferences within any solidarity play a central role: “on the whole, our club used to be not such, how shall I put it, informal “get-together” well, it’s a kind of subculture as if music used to be welcomed. Well, nobody used to listen to chanson, Music with a capital M, more less for about a year lyric music had been played” (The fragment from the interview Int_2_D Rus).

One more characteristic feature of solidarity, formed around the club “Rus” is an interest in history and literature. They read a lot and always: books are downloaded in phones, in e-books, somebody prefers paper format. The leader of the club reads fantasy a lot and specialized literature in history that allows for example, to reconstruct an authentic amour, fitting the amour of English King Eduard of the black prince. One of the informants prefers reading the stories by Chekhov: “I read short collected stories. It is this epoch that is there of that age and you understand that people used to think the way people think now, they used to have the same vices, the same yards, everything’s the same. And he conveys it highly coloured and straight surgically precise. They say he is a surgeon, once Pelevin produced an impression, he, certainly, in effect without reality support keeps on writing but some moments as though scratch the interesting thoughts out at all” (The fragment from the interview Int_2_D Rus).

The characteristic feature of the youth association under consideration is the combination of cultural practices and interests from different as it would seem, spheres: religion, ardour for history, religiousness, patriotic moods and subcultural strategies.

The club was established in February 2011, on initiative of the dean of the church. From the words of one of the leaders of the club, “the leaders share our views on history” and have given premises without rental fee (endnote 1). The club is situated in the basement of the forge on the territory of the church. Informal name of this organization is the club of historical fencing.

From the research journal (11.11.12): “Roma considers that this is the name of the club, anyway. But this is the name “Rus” to be liked by vergers. In an informant’s judgment, the best name for it is “Den”. Officially, the club is orthodox-patriotic”.

Generally speaking, historical fencing is the heaviest historical reconstruction as most of the participants of

this movement think: “In order to wear armour, moreover, to fight with it on, it is necessary to be athletic-looking and of great endurance”. In Ulianovsk, there are several clubs that deal with training such fighters but they differ greatly in their inward essence and atmosphere. There are formalized associations turned into hobby groups at children’s center of creative work (for example, the club “Kremen”), there are the clubs with vast experience and long history (the clubs “the squad Vityaz” or “Lynx”). And such club as “Rus” has emerged, formed, on the one hand, recently and having informal character, on the other hand, possessing historical continuity. The matter is that the club “Rus”, first and foremost, thanks to its leader is “a continuer of traditions” of another historical club. The considered informal organization traversed path from the personal interest to historical reconstruction/fencing then to establishing the club at the orthodox church already at semi-formal level. Before, the leaders and the closest surrounding used to rank themselves with radically aiming nationalist part of the youth groups (endnote 2).

The principal kinds of activity and daily practices are: physical trainings (special training), the elements of hand-to-hand fighting, the very fencing, making equipment of the Slavs (13-16 century), armament of the early middle ages of 9-14 centuries. But, the linking tendency remains the communication with each other on the basis of patriotic subject area and interest in history. The basic practices in the club are described by one of the respondents: “Besides trainings, we sat, communicated, for example did some work, talked in the cellar; may be it happened so, it concurred, that people are psychologically compatible with each other then, we went together, for example to the concerts somewhere, cultural event birthday parties” (From the interview Int_2_D Rus).

The atmosphere in the club was special: everybody described it as “family, warm, home”. Most people, who visited the club, marked the ease of communication, described the company to be as relatives. Undoubtedly, such atmosphere could be created only by the leader of the club. Besides, it should be noted that the very historical fencing proved to take, rather the second place, from the words of one of the informants “it was a club-gethering: they went, roughly speaking, Sashka was in good mood he trained them, next time since he was in temper he trained them intensively and there was third time, since they came, well, they drank beer, sat for a while, made equipment, any system” (From the interview Int_3_R Rus). Communication took the first place, so called “talking” which did not stop even during physical trainings (for example, press-up): “probably, about

80 people attended our club. Because one came, then left in the beginning we trained, then we were sitting and discussing something. Sasha drew up the rule. We were sitting and sewing shirts for example white shirt means youth. We sewed caps, wide trousers, there was always get-together, the discussions in the end. We always discussed something, for example Sasha offered a topic” (From the interview Int_7_An Rus).

The club had its own rules, it was connected with the fact that in the beginning the club was situated in the territory of private property. Confidence and respect held a high position. Confidence was backed by honest words of other members of the club. So, for example, when large number of people began to attend the club every weekend, the leader introduced a rule: one could come to the club only with an introduction from a club, that is, it was believed that man guaranteed dignified bearing of a new participant of the club. Or one more case: for coming late without reasonable excuse or preliminary call, the whole club pressed up waiting for latecomer. From the words of the club, in the club “I remember, the process itself enticed, we are like a family even, for example one came, sculpted two halves of the helmet and damned, it’s great, everybody supported, the model succeeded” (From the interview Int_7_An Rus). Creating an atmosphere of family, intimacy and confidence was promoted by the fact that the club was in the house: “everybody knows our family, always ask: how is your mother? Ksyusha? I’d like to drop and get to know actually, it was not without a trace, mother, we have frozen there in the basement, she is getting pancakes down or compote, take it, against the background the fact that mother Ksyusha, generally speaking, was brought up by the club” (From the interview Int_7_An Rus).

In 2010, the club practically broke up “the leader changed the level of life (endnote 3), there were no housing, we ceased to gather in the basement, our public garden, our ground was overgrown horizontal bar and ring” (From the interview Int_7_An Rus). The leader of the club began to go in for strikeball (endnote 4) where he got acquainted with the informant T., engaged in the movement of opposition (nationalistic sense) (endnote).

In 2011, the dean of the church offered him to set up already military historical patriotic club at the church, where the church was situated. Permanent members of “gathering” worked at this forge and headed the orthodox patriotic club at the same time. Besides, in that year the leader entered the organization named Russian motorcyclists “The Night Wolves” and became an official tattoo-maker of the club. At this, the first stage of

consolidation of the young people around historical fencing ended and the second stage connected with such location as the forge at the orthodox church began.

CONCLUSION

In terms of understanding solidarity may involve various youth societies, different subcultural organization, it is safe to say that the participants being engaged in the considered youth scene are united by a single practised style of life. Making preliminary conclusions, one may single out the following key ideas that are kept to in the considered solidarity:

- Music (mainly, heavy)
- Patriotism (by way of interest in history, in religious beliefs of ancestors)
- Anticonsumerism
- Healthy life-style

The identity of this solidarity is that it is mainly male surrounding and here the interest in weightlifting sports, physical work (urge for doing-it-yourself) dominates. Besides, it is important to note one more common vector of consolidation is independent character of all organized activities: the considered united organization initiates different kinds of proper activity without being depended on the structures and institutes, this is solidarity, created “from below”, imposed by no one from above.

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