


Differences in Socio-economic Transformations of Rural Communities in Russian Multi-ethnic Regions

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Abstract

The article analyzes the differences in the rural communities' transformation in some national republics of Russia. To verify the hypothesis put forward on the basis of a review of sources and field observations, demographic statistics, rural settlement and other indicators characterizing the rural population are analyzed. Among rural communities with different ethnic identities, there is a significant differentiation in the share of the rural population, birth rate and settlement structure. Differentiation is due to the different involvement of ethnic rural communities in urbanization processes and processes of social modernization. Analysis and classification of differences made it possible to identify options (inertial and modernization) and stages ("expansion", "from expansion to compression", "compression" and "disappearance in the previous format") of the post-Soviet rural communities transformation. Most of the Russian rural communities are undergoing active modernization. At the same time, in rural areas of Russia, there are still rural communities at the stage of "expansion" (largely Dagestani and Ingush rural communities). The discussion section presents a classification of ethnic rural communities in Russia according to their predominant variant and stage of transformation in the post-Soviet period. Based on the results of field studies, examples are given that confirm the presence of deviations from the predominant variant and stage of transformation of rural communities. For example, the leading factor in the differences in the variants and stages of socio-economic transformation of the surveyed Tatar and Chuvash rural communities of the Batyrevsky and Fyodorovsky districts is the development of the economic base of the region. Due to the more active Soviet industrialization of the economy of Bashkortostan, many communities in the Fyodorovsky district are at the stage of "compression" and "disappearance", while in the Batyrevsky district only in recent decades has the outflow of population to the cities accelerated. In addition, a comparative analysis of the rural settlement transformation of ethnic groups made it possible to confirm the universality of the stages of rural communities' transformation. In the Batyrevsky district this is expressed, for example, in the temporary lag of depopulation of Tatar and Chuvash rural communities.

Keywords: ethnic groups, migration, social modernization, local rural-urban systems, socio-economic transformation, rural areas

Introduction

In the post-Soviet period, rural areas of Russia have undergone large-scale transformations associated with the destruction of the collective-state farm system and large-scale depopulation of the rural population due to its migration outflow to the cities. Post-Soviet transformation processes in rural areas of Russian regions have different speeds and spatial coverage (Alekseev & Safronov, 2017; Nefedova, 2012b).

The socio-economic transformation of rural areas in the national republics of Russia has its own specifics (Nefedova, 2012ab). In 1992-2020, the share of the rural population living in the national republics of Russia increased by 4 percentage points or 0.8 million people, reaching 26% (9.6 million people), despite an overall decrease in the rural population in the country by 5% or 1.9 million people.

This illustrates the completely different functioning of rural areas in the national republics of Russia in comparison with the regions with predominantly Russian population shares. However, the dynamics of the demographic development of rural areas in the national republics is uneven: an increase in the rural population is recorded only in the republics of the North Caucasus and some national republics of Siberia.

The focus of research by Russian geographers has traditionally been on zonal features of rural settlement and zonal types of rural areas. Works describing the characteristics and problems of rural development in individual regions have become widespread. The rural areas of the Central Non-Black Earth Region with a historically high share of the Russian population have been studied most thoroughly (Averkieva, 2021). Particular attention is paid to its features of demographic and economic contraction, and then the revitalization of rural areas through the development of dacha recreation (Averkieva et al., 2021; Fomkina, 2017).

Ethnocultural differences in rural areas are most often considered as one of the factors of spatial differentiation of rural areas through the prism of demography, economics and lifestyle of the population (Nefedova, 2012b). There are also several works describing the ethnically expressed rural areas of Russian regions using the example of individual national republics: Buryatia - (Breslavsky, 2013), Tuva - (Gusakov, 2019) and Chuvashia - (Imangulov, 2021).

A comparative analysis of the results of post-Soviet regional studies of rural areas in Russia suggests the existence of prevailing variants of transformation of rural communities with different ethnic population structures. This hypothesis was also voiced by the leading researcher of rural Russia, T.G. Nefedova: "...a comparison of modern rural communities of some non-Russian peoples on the territory of Russia with Russian demographically full-fledged communities of the beginning of the 20th century does not exclude the hypothesis of identical, but chronologically different phases of the life cycle of rural communities..." (Nefedova, 2012b).

However, this scientific idea in Russian geographical science, despite the presence of studies in the field of ethnic differentiation of the rural population (for example, - (Alekseev&Imangulov, 2022; Imangulov, 2023; Cherkasov, 2018)), did not receive further development, which emphasizes the relevance of this study.

Abroad, there are often works describing ethnically expressed rural areas. However, it is extremely rare to find works directly linking the options and stages of development of rural communities and rural settlement. Among such works, one can highlight the study (Collins-Kreiner, 2013), in which the dynamics of the development of a network of villages in the central part of Israel is considered using the "Product Life Cycle" model.

In the actively industrializing and urbanizing PRC, the development of rural communities is considered in interaction with the external (mainly urban) environment, which can lead to the growth, decline, or even disappearance of rural communities (Yuheng et al., 2019; Hualou et al., 2021). For example, in the northern Chinese province of Shanxi, researchers identified 5 types of development of rural settlements and, accordingly, rural communities in the context of the active spread of urbanization processes: "growth", "maturity", "flourishing transformation", "stepwise regression" and "decline" (Yajing et al., 2022).

A review of Russian and foreign works did not find studies in which, when studying the development of rural communities, the ethnic structure of the population is considered in relation to the transformation of rural settlement of the population. Although the ethnic structure of the population based on the experience of studying local rural areas of Russia, is able to classify, for example, different trends in the population dynamics of villages (Imangulov et al., 2021) or the dynamics of agricultural production (Nefedova, 2012b; Fadeeva, 2015).

In this regard, the purpose of this study is to verify, based on open statistical data, the hypothesis about the existence of differences in the prevailing variants and stages of transformation of rural communities with different ethnic population structures. The result of this study should be a classification of ethnic rural communities in Russia in accordance with their prevailing variants and stages of transformation.

Methods and Materials

The titular population of the national republics has a number of aggregate differences from the Russian majority in the country. In Russia, this is due to the different involvement of ethnic groups in the socio-economic development trends that are common for the country and the world (Demographic, 2006; Zubarevich, 2003).

In this regard, the transformation of rural communities in national republics is determined not only by, for example, the universal processes of urbanization throughout the world but also by the economic, social, and cultural modernization of the non-Russian population, which either partially underwent modernization during the Soviet period or is just being drawn into it.

The object of this study is ethnic rural communities, by which the author means an ethnic community of people with a certain geographical localization (in a settlement/settlements) and the presence of close social ties between its members. The author in the study distinguishes between the concepts of ethnos and ethnic groups: rural communities of a region as a whole or an ethnos (for example, Russian rural communities of the Ivanovo region) and a specific rural community of a settlement (for example, the Russian rural community of the village of Vladimirovka in the Ivanovo region).

To verify the above hypothesis, the study first (1) analyzes the differentiation of rural communities of the titular peoples of the national republics according to their involvement (a) in urbanization processes and (b) in the processes of social (demographic) modernization of the population. For this purpose, the study uses the following basic indicators of the characteristics of the rural population, which serve as indicators of processes (Table 1).

Table 1: Indicators of options for transformation of rural communities and settlement communities

Characteristics rural communities	Indicators	Data sources
Demographics	Dynamics of rural population	Population censuses of the Russian Federation in 2002, 2010 and 2021
	Structure of rural settlement	
	Birth rate of rural population	BDPMO RF
Migration	Average size of rural household	BDPMO RF
	Rural population share	Population censuses of the Russian Federation in 2002, 2010 and 2021
Economic	Labor migration of rural population	Expert assessments
	Structure of employment of rural population	Expert assessments

Further (2) the post-Soviet transformation of rural settlement of the ethnic group in rural areas¹ is analyzed because changes in the distribution of the rural population across different classes of rural settlements by population may indicate trends in the compression, stabilization or expansion of the settlement of ethnic groups.

The study is based on two groups of materials. The first group includes open statistical data, in particular the All-Union and All-Russian population censuses of 1989, 2002, 2010 and 2020. The second group of materials is represented by the results of expeditions, in particular visual observations, and the results of expert and in-depth interviews with the rural population.

In the period from 2021-2024, within the framework of various projects, the author visited and surveyed 24 peripheral/semi-peripheral areas² with a predominantly rural population in 8 national republics of the Russian Federation. The surveyed republics: Bashkortostan, Buryatia, Dagestan, Ingushetia, Mordovia, North Ossetia-Alania, Tatarstan and Chuvashia. This sample of national republics almost completely covers the ethnocultural diversity of the main zone of settlement and economic development of Russia.

The verification of the research hypothesis is carried out on the example of rural communities of the titular ethnic groups of the visited and surveyed republics: Bashkir, Buryat, Dagestan (Avar, Dargin,

¹In the study, the rural settlement of an ethnic group in rural areas refers to the totality of rural settlements in which the share of the corresponding ethnic group in the ethnic structure of the population exceeds 60%.

²The choice of areas with peripheral and semi-peripheral locations for the survey is due to the fact that in areas with a suburban location, completely different socio-economic processes are recorded due to the agglomeration influence of cities.

Kumyk, Lak, Lezgin, Rutul and Tabasaran), Ingush, Mordvin, Ossetian, Tatar, and Chuvash rural communities.

Results

The spread of urbanization processes determines the transformation of rural communities of any ethnic identity in the post-Soviet space. With a systematic increase in the share of the urban population of an ethnic group, there is a "washing out of the population" from rural areas, which ultimately is reflected either in a decrease in the number of rural communities or their disappearance.

There is a certain differentiation of the analyzed ethnic groups of Russia according to the share of urban and rural population (Table 2). A high share of the rural population (above 50%) is found among the Dagestani peoples, except for the Laks and Lezgins, as well as the Buryats, Bashkirs, and Chuvashes (2020). Average and low values of the share of the rural population (less than 50%) are found among the Mordvins, Lezgins, Ossetians, Tatars, Laks, Russians and, Ukrainians.

The urbanization indicator of an ethnic group is primarily influenced by the time of the beginning of large-scale migrations of the rural population "village-city". Russians and Ukrainians initially have a richer experience of population mobility, especially in the pre-revolutionary period (resettlement to newly developed territories, seasonal migration of peasants to cities, etc.).

For other ethnic groups, the key barrier to migration from the village to the city was the lack of knowledge of the Russian language. For this reason, non-Russian ethnic groups began to migrate to the city with a certain time lag. In the 1980s, more than 50% of the Tatar, Ossetian, and Lak population already lived in urban areas. Later, in 1989, more than 50% of the Mordvins lived in cities, and in 2020, Lezgins. Other ethnic groups (Chuvash, Bashkirs, Buryats and other Dagestani peoples) never crossed the threshold of 50% of the urban population.

In 1989–2020 decrease in the rural population was recorded among Ukrainians, Mordvins, Chuvashes, Tatars, and Russians; stabilization—among the Buryats; growth—among the Bashkirs, Ossetians, Ingush, and Dagestani peoples (Table 1).

In addition to the scale of rural-urban migration, the dynamics of the rural population of ethnic groups is affected by the birth rate, which can, for example, in the Republic of Dagestan affect the growth of the rural population even in rural areas with migration-related population loss.

The maximum value of the total fertility rate of the rural population in 2019 (over 14 per mille) was among the Dagestani peoples, with the exception of the Lezgins and Nogais, as well as the Ossetians, Bashkirs, and Buryats, which indicates that the demographic transition of the rural population is not yet complete. The minimum value of the indicator (less than 10 per mille) is among Russians, Ukrainians, Mordvins, Chuvashes, and Tatars.

The average private rural household indicator gives an almost identical distribution of ethnic groups: the tradition of a large family has been noticeably preserved among the rural population of the peoples of Dagestan and Ossetia, while among Russians, Mordvins, Chuvashes, and even Tatars, the average size of a rural household is less than 3 people.

Table 2. Some indicators of transformation of rural communities with different ethnic population structures

Indicator	Rural population share, %	Dynamics of rural population, %	Total fertility rate, per mille*	Average household size, people*
Year / period	2020	1989-2020	2019	2010
Laks	28.5	27.0	14.9	3.8
Tatars	32.7	-18.5	9.8	2.9
Ossetians	37.5	34.1	15.7	3.7
Lezgins	44.8	52.1	11.6	4.2
Mordva	48.7	-54.0	6.5	2.8
Chuvash	51.0	-38.9	8.4	2.7
Bashkirs	51.4	18.4	14.9	3.2
Buryats	52.5	-0.2	15.4	No data
Kumyks	52.8	97.3	20.6	4.6
Tabasarans	52.9	31.8	16.0	4.4
Rutuls	57.4	43.0	16.0	4.4
Avars	62.0	70.4	18.7	3.7
Dargins	63.5	59.0	17.8	3.5
Nogais	66.3	19.6	11.8	4.5

**Note: the table presents average values of indicators for several peripheral mono-ethnic rural areas within the republics in which the ethnic group is the titular one*

In accordance with the characteristics of the rural population of different ethnic groups, the following groups of ethnic rural communities with similar indicator values are distinguished:

Group 1: Russian, Ukrainian, Tatar, Mordvin, Chuvash;

Rural communities of the first group as a whole have experienced or are still experiencing a significant migration outflow of part of the population to cities. Urbanization processes have undermined the demographic potential of most communities. Ethnic assimilation has an additional negative impact on the population dynamics of Mordvin and Chuvash rural communities.

Group 2: Bashkir, Buryat;

Rural communities of the second group have only in recent decades begun to experience a significant migration outflow of the population to cities. Rural communities have significant demographic potential for development, as a result of which either an increase in the rural population in the post-Soviet period (Bashkir) or its stabilization against the background of migration to cities (Buryat) is noted.

Group 3: Ossetian, Lezgin, Lak;

Rural communities of the third group as a whole experienced a migration outflow of part of the population back in the 20th century. This is illustrated by the indicator of the low share of the rural population of the corresponding ethnic groups in comparison with other ethnic groups of the North Caucasus. At the same time, Ossetian, Lezgin, and Lak rural communities demonstrate similar rates of natural growth as other Caucasian rural communities, which is reflected in the increase in their population in the post-Soviet period.

Group 4: Avar, Dargin, Nogai, Kumyk, Tabasaran and Rutul.

Rural communities of the fourth group in recent decades have generally demonstrated an explosive growth in population: from 20-30% to 100%. It is associated primarily with high birth rates, which are capable at this stage of compensating for the migration outflow of the rural population to the cities.

Differences in some indicators characterizing the demographic development of different ethnic rural communities are due to the different degree of involvement of ethnic groups in the processes of demographic modernization. Most ethnic rural communities are currently actively modernizing. At the same time, some rural communities are going through socio-cultural modernization of the Eastern type, expressed in the preservation of traditional elements (for example, rural communities of Dagestan, Ingush, etc.). Another part of rural communities is apparently going through modernization of the Western type, expressed in the active displacement of traditional elements by modern ones (for example, Bashkir, Buryat, Tatar, Chuvash and Mordvin communities).

At the same time, part of the ethnic rural communities, in connection with their more active social and, in particular, demographic modernization during the Soviet period,

At the same time, some ethnic rural communities, due to their more active social and in particular demographic modernization during the Soviet period (Demographic, 2006), are characterized by an inertial version of transformation, expressed, for example, in the preservation of established demographic trends in earlier periods (for example, Russian and Ukrainian rural communities).

Ethnic rural communities, in addition to differences in the variants of socio-economic transformation ("inertial - modernization"), differ in the prevailing stage of transformation of rural communities. This is most clearly confirmed by the structure of rural population settlement³ in terms of ethnic identity and its post-Soviet dynamics.

The distribution of the number of settlements by different population classes between ethnic communities confirms the thesis about the more vibrant ethnic rural communities of Dagestan from a demographic point of view (Table 3). The number of rural settlements with a population in the 501-1000 and 1001-2000 classes, on the contrary, is minimal in the ethnic rural communities of the Ural-Volga region.

Table 3. Distribution of the total number of rural settlements of the corresponding ethnic group by population class, 2002, %

	Less than 50	51-200	201-500	501-1000	1001-2000	2001-5000	More than 5000
Settlement in dry steppe and semi-desert zones (500-1000 people)							
Nogais	2.8	16.7	19.4	25.0	25.0	5.6	5.6
Large dense settlement in the southern regions (1000-3000 people)							

³In this paper, the rural settlement of ethnic groups is understood as the entire set of rural settlements with a share of the corresponding ethnic group in their ethnic structure above 60%.

Kumyks	0	6.8	6.8	8.5	23.7	35.6	18.6
Mountain focal settlement (200-500 people)							
Tabasarans	4.4	13.3	38.9	25.6	13.3	4.4	0,0
Lezgins	4.5	14.2	20.6	20.6	21.9	15.5	2.6
Rutuls	6.3	6.3	31.3	31.3	12.5	12.5	0,0
Dargins	7.2	25.3	26.3	18.1	13.4	7.2	2.5
Laks	9.6	35.6	35.6	9.6	6.8	2.7	0,0
Avars	10.9	27.4	22.8	15.5	13.6	7.5	2.4
Ossetians	33.7	14.0	10.5	8.1	16.3	9.3	8.1
Medium- and large-scale settlement in the central zone of Russia (200-500 people)							
Chuvash	9.9	44.5	30.3	11.8	2.6	0.8	0.1
Tatars	12.1	32.3	36.4	15.2	2.9	0.7	0.4
Bashkirs	15.2	34.1	34.2	13.8	2.0	0.3	0.4
Mordva	30.2	26.1	26.1	13.3	3.1	1.0	0.2
Medium-sized focal settlement (200-500 people)							
Buryats	8.7	24.3	29.6	22.8	12.6	1.5	0.5

The analysis of the transformation of rural settlement patterns of ethnic groups in 2002-2020 (Table 4) allows us to draw two important conclusions.

Table 4. Change in the number of rural settlements of the corresponding ethnic group by different population classes, 2002-2020, %

	Less than 50	51-200	201-500	501-1000	1001-2000	2001-5000	More than 5000
Settlement in dry steppe and semi-desert zones (500-1000 people)							
Nogais	3.9	-10.0	13.9	1.7	-5.0	-2.2	-2.2
Large dense settlement in the southern regions (1000-3000 people)							
Kumyks	1.5	-5.2	0.9	0.8	-0.7	-7.9	10.6
Mountain focal settlement (200-500 people)							
Tabasarans	1,1	4.2	-4.8	0.8	-1,2	0,0	0,0
Lezgins	1.3	3.3	-5.7	1.4	0.1	-0.5	0,0
Rutuls	16.0	-0.7	7.6	-14.6	-1.4	-6.9	0,0
Dargins	1,2	-2.7	-1.7	1.0	-0.2	1.6	0.7
Laks	1,1	-4.9	-0.9	3.7	-2.8	2.6	1.3
Avars	1.9	-5.1	0.4	2.0	-2.7	3.0	0.4
Ossetians	4.2	5.3	-5.5	-0.1	-0.8	-0.6	-2.5
Medium- and large-scale settlement in the central zone of Russia (200-500 people)							
Chuvash	7.7	5.7	-6.5	-5.7	-1,1	-0.1	0,0
Tatars	4.3	5.8	-5.1	-4.8	-0.2	0.1	-0.1
Bashkirs	6.1	3.7	-5.4	-5.0	0.3	0.1	0.2
Mordva	8.8	3.0	-2.8	-7.2	-1.6	0,0	-0.2
Medium-sized focal settlement (200-500 people)							
Buryats	5.3	3.7	-2.6	0.2	-9.1	1.0	1.5

Firstly, the simultaneous reduction in the number of medium-sized (201-1000 people) and increase in the number of small settlements (less than 50 people) among the peoples of the Ural-Volga region, some peoples of Dagestan (Rutuls, Lezgins and Tabasarans), Ossetians, and Buryats is the result of the processes of depopulation and compression of the corresponding rural communities.

Secondly, the simultaneous increase in the number of medium (201-1000 people) and very large settlements (more than 2000 people) against the background of a decrease in the number of large settlements (1001-2000 people) among the other peoples of Dagestan (Nogais, Kumyks, Avars, Laks) is the result of a gradual "erosion" of the middle link of rural settlements. It was observed among the peoples of the Ural-Volga region in earlier periods.

Discussions

Differentiation of the surveyed ethnic rural communities of Russia in accordance with demographic characteristics and features of rural settlement in dynamics confirms the put forward hypothesis, formulated on the basis of a bibliographic review of sources and visual observations.

The diversity of ethnic rural communities in the national republics of Russia in the post-Soviet period demonstrates different dynamics and directions of transformation.

Based on the transformation of the rural settlement of the population, it was found that the transformation of rural communities has a certain stage-by-stage nature, which can be reduced to the

following stages observed in Russian regions: "Expansion", "From expansion to compression", "Compression", "Disappearance (community in the previous format)".

Taking into account the ethnic structure of the population, the rural areas of Russia can be described as a set of ethnic rural communities at different stages of transformation.

The "Expansion" stage, rarely encountered in Russian regions, is quite widespread among the rural communities of the North Caucasus. These rural communities are distinguished by a younger age structure of the population, high birth rates, and population growth. This is facilitated by the post-Soviet strengthening of the position of religion (Islam) among the population, the traditional structure of society, and conservatism. However, some of the North Caucasian rural communities do not belong to this stage (for example, Ossetian, Lezgin and Lak). In the case of the Lezgins, this is due to the historically higher spatial mobility of the population (rural Lezgins actively participated in labor migrations to oil fields in the 19th-20th centuries). Lak rural communities were significantly influenced by institutional conditions: the implementation of the program of "settling highlanders on the plain" and the resettlement of Laks to the lands of Chechens deported during the Soviet period.

The development of Ossetian rural communities is closely linked to the dynamics of the economic base of the Republic of North Ossetia-Alania. During the periods of Soviet industrialization, the urban population among Ossetians grew. As a result of the degradation of the economic base of the republic in the transition period (in the 1990s), on the contrary, there is an increase in the rural population (some temporary "rollback" to the past), which now, however, has begun to decrease again due to urbanization of a non-industrial nature.

The stage "From expansion to compression" is characteristic of the Bashkir, Buryat, Ossetian, Chuvash and Lezgin rural communities. These ethnic rural communities only began to be actively involved in urbanization processes at the end of the 20th - beginning of the 21st centuries, which, for example, in Buryatia led to the rapid growth of the suburbs of Ulan-Ude, and in Bashkiria to the "indigenization" of the ethnic structure of the population of the regional capital - Ufa.

At the same time, the demographic potential of most of these ethnic rural communities has already been somewhat undermined, which is expressed in a fairly high share of the urban population (from 40 to 60%). The high migration outflow of the rural population is supported by a decrease in the birth rate and the destruction of traditional ways of life of communities.

The "Compression" stage is typical for Tatar and Lak rural communities. It is these rural communities, with the exception of the Russian and Ukrainian population, that have suffered the most from the urbanization processes. A high proportion of the elderly population and low birth rates generally characterize Tatar rural communities.

Lak rural communities look slightly better against the background of Tatar rural communities, but the demographic potential undermined during the Soviet period significantly limits their development. In mountainous rural areas with a Lak majority (Lak and Kulinsky districts), abandoned settlements can very often be found. Inhabited settlements are characterized by extremely small size, significant seasonal differences in population dynamics, and high values of the share of empty housing stock.

The "Disappearance" stage of rural communities is less common in the national republics. Most often, these are Russian and Ukrainian rural communities, represented by small settlements with a predominantly elderly population or medium-sized settlements with a minimum share of families with children under 18. It is noteworthy that the abandonment of some settlements is opposed by new city dwellers—former rural residents—who, in the status of recreationists, complement the rural community. However, this still leads to the disappearance of former rural communities with a traditional way of life.

This is facilitated by the demographic transition that Russians and Ukrainians have gone through and the total outflow of population to cities.

Mordvin rural communities complement the list of these two ethnic groups, despite the fact that in the structure of the Mordvins the proportion of the urban population is significantly lower (51.3%). This is due to the extremely active spread of ethnic assimilation. It, coupled with the low birth rate, leads to a significant reduction in the rural population (-54% in 1989-2020) and the depopulation of rural settlements. Often in the intercensal periods, one can observe how Mordvin villages simply disappear on the map, turning into Russian ones.

It should be said that behind such a rapid transformation of ethnic identity, even among rural Mordvins, there is, for example, the actual disappearance of traditional economic structures and practices (abandonment of traditional gardening for Mordvin peasants), transformation of the way of life (disappearance of pagan elements), etc.

The above stages of transformation illustrate well how much rural communities are alive at the present time. From the text above, it is clear that in addition to general characteristics (demography, settlement, etc.), a special role is played by whether ethnic rural communities have undergone demographic modernization. This is important since it determines their preservation until the appearance of external actors of influence.

Accordingly, the transformation of ethnic rural communities in the post-Soviet period can be "inertial" or "modernization".

The first case is typical for Russian, Ukrainian, and Mordvin rural communities, the Soviet and post-Soviet development trends of which are identical (the main trend is depopulation and polarization of rural settlement). The second case is typical for other ethnic rural communities, which are not homogeneous within themselves due to different rates of demographic modernization, which gives rise to many variations in the development of rural areas with different ethnic population structures. Thus, by correlating the options and stages of transformation of different ethnic rural communities, we can obtain their following distribution (Table 5).

Table 5. Prevailing variants and stages of post-Soviet transformation of ethnic rural communities

		Options for post-Soviet transformation of rural communities	
		"Inertial"	"Modernization"
Stages of transformation of rural communities	"Expansion"	-	Avar, Dargin, Ingush, Kumyk, Nogai, Tabasaran, Rutul
	"From expansion to compression"	-	Bashkir, Buryat, Ossetian, Chuvash, Lezgin
	"Compression"	-	Tatar, Lak
	"Disappearance (of the community in the previous format)»"	Russian, Ukrainian	Mordvins

In one way or another, based on data from other ethnic groups in Russia, a researcher or reader can supplement this distribution or test the methodology for their own research purposes using another region or country with a different ethnic population structure as an example.

Above, we discussed the prevailing variants and stages of transformation of ethnically different rural communities. However, when turning to local areas, one can even find in places a complete discrepancy between the variants and stages of transformation of rural communities with the same ethnic identity due to the local context. Let us briefly examine the variants and stages of transformation of rural communities that deviate from the general population.

To do this, let us compare two pairs of rural districts in the Volga region and the North Caucasus with a similar ethnic set of rural communities and the same characteristics of the territories.

1. Fyodorovsky District of the Republic of Bashkortostan—Batyrevsky District of Chuvashia.

Both the Tatar and Chuvash populations live compactly in rural districts (Table 6).

Table 6. Some socio-economic characteristics of the surveyed areas of Bashkiria and Chuvashia

Characteristics	Year	Republic of Bashkortostan	Chuvashia Republic
		Fyodorovsky district	Batyrevsky district
Distance to the regional center, km		214	132
Rural population density, people/km ²	2020	9,6 <i>(For reference: in the region as a whole - 10,6)</i>	34 <i>(For reference: in the region as a whole – 23,9)</i>
Zonal features of rural settlement		Continuous development, medium and large population	Continuous development, small-medium populated
Population, thousand people	2020	16,2	32
Dynamics of rural population, %	1989-2020	-17,6	-28,1
Time of emergence of a stable rural settlement network		1850 - 1890	XVI-XVII centuries

Characteristics	Year	Republic of Bashkortostan	Chuvashia Republic
		Fyodorovsky district	Batyrevsky district
Ethnic structure of the population, %	2020	Tatars – 31,8 Russians – 24,5 Bashkirs – 21,8 Chuvash – 10,9 Mordvins – 9,5	Chuvashes – 67 Tatars – 30,9 Russians – 1,3 Mordvins - less than 1
Average population of rural settlements in the district by ethnic group, people	2020	Bashkirs - 302 Tatars - 301 Chuvash - 156 Mordovians - 147 Russians - 48 In the district as a whole - 237	Chuvashes - 487 Tatars - 1016 In the district as a whole - 572

Tatar rural communities of Fyodorovsky District are at the stage of active "compression", while Tatar communities of Batyrevsky District are mostly at the stage of "expansion", or "from expansion to compression". Such a situation is largely due to the different time of involvement of the rural population in "village-city" migration.

Tatar communities in Fyodorovsky District are distinguished by an elderly age structure of the population: in some villages, young families with children are practically absent or are present in limited numbers (up to 5-10 families). For example, in the villages of Akbulatovo and Izhbulyak, out of 100-200 permanent residents, more than 50% are people over 50 years old. It is noteworthy that despite the demographic crisis of these rural communities, the traditional economic structure is preserved thanks to representatives of older generations (an indicator of social modernization of the eastern type).

Tatar communities in Batyrevsky District, on the contrary, have a comparatively young population structure: in the villages there are many young families with an average number of children of two or more people. The Tatar villages of Chuvashia are extremely populous (the average size of a settlement in 2020 was 1,016 people, compared to 301 people in the Fyodorovsky District⁴) and extremely religious. The communities are quite closed, traditional and conservative.

The same situation is observed in relation to the Chuvash rural communities of the surveyed districts. In the Batyrevsky district, they are mainly at the stage of "from expansion to compression". In the Fyodorovsky district, there are Chuvash rural communities of two stages - both "from expansion to compression" and "compression". It is noteworthy that the dynamics of the average size of Chuvash settlements in the two districts revealed that the Chuvash communities of the Batyrevsky district are also beginning to depopulate in the post-Soviet period, repeating the dynamics of the Chuvashes of the Fyodorovsky district with a time lag of 30-50 years.

It is interesting that the transformation of Chuvash rural communities of the same stage "from expansion to compression" in two remote districts proceeds differently. For example, in the Fyodorovsky district, the male population began to participate on a large scale in labor migration to the mining regions of Siberia to replace Soviet employment in collective and state farms. In the Batyrevsky district in the post-Soviet period, relatively large personal subsidiary farms of the population became a solid basis for family budgets of the rural population. The cases considered emphasize the importance of considering the dynamics of the economic base of the region in which communities live at the stage of active urbanization: in Bashkortostan, rural communities underwent active transformation back in the Soviet period, while in Chuvashia it is only observed, but already in different conditions.

2. Levashinsky-Botlikhsky districts of the Republic of Dagestan.

Levashinsky and Botlikhsky districts are in the inner mountain part of the Republic of Dagestan. Dargins and Avars inhabit the first district, the second only by Avars (Table 7). In these mountainous districts, the Soviet state program for resettling the mountain population to the plain was not implemented, because of which the districts have an extremely high population and population growth in the post-Soviet period.

For the Avar communities of the Botlikh district, the predominant stage of transformation of rural communities is "expansion" (corresponds to the stage of transformation of the Avar rural communities of Dagestan as a whole). This is due to both a high birth rate and minimal migration of the population

⁴In the Fyodorovsky district, the maximum average population of Tatar settlements of 916 people was recorded by the population census in 1926, after which there was a consistent decrease.

(the local population works in private subsidiary farms and participates with families in labor migrations outside the republic).

At the same time, in some Avar rural communities of the Levashinsky district (for example, in the village of Kutisha), on the contrary, there is a large-scale migration of young people in the direction of "village-city". One of the main reasons is the different degree of competitiveness of the population in the urban labor markets due to differences in the education of the population.

A similar situation is observed between the Dargin rural communities of the Levashinsky district. In some Dargin rural communities, due to the extremely high religiosity of the population, it is not customary to send children to school at all or to send them until the 9th grade. Parents justify this by the low practical significance of education in the conditions of the availability of more profitable employment opportunities in rural settlements (growing white cabbage and vegetables, transportation, trade, etc.). As a result, some Dargin rural communities are distinguished by simply "explosive growth" in population, which outpaces the overall regional growth rates of the rural population.

Table 7. Some socio-economic characteristics of the surveyed areas of Dagestan

Characteristics	Year	Republic of Dagestan	
		Levashinsky district	Botlikhsky district
Distance to the regional center, km		94	145
Geomorphological region (altitude zone)		Intramountain region of mountainous Dagestan	
Rural population density, people/km ²	2020	98,9	87,2
Zonal features of rural settlement		Mountain focal livestock and agricultural settlement	
Population, thousand people	2020	80,4	59,9
Dynamics of rural population, %	1989-2020	Has grown 2 times	Increased by 2,2 times
Time of emergence of a stable rural settlement network		Approximately one chronological period (more than 300 years)	
Ethnic structure of the population, %	2020	Dargins – 77,2 Avars – 21,2 Others – 1,6	Avars – 96,3 Others – 3,7
Average population of rural settlements in the district by ethnic group, people	2020	Dargins – 1128 Avars – 1918	Avars – 1619

Deviations in the stages and variants of transformation of ethnic rural communities of Dagestan are associated, among other things, with the level of education of the rural population, which somewhere has a positive effect on the stability of rural settlement. This is because the higher the level of education of representatives of rural communities, the more options they must choose from and, as a rule, the higher their migration mobility, which is reflected in the depopulation of, for example, the same Avar village of Kutisha.

Conclusion

Based on the analysis of the values of demographic indicators and the settlement structure of the rural population of different ethnic groups, it was possible to identify differences in the prevailing variants of the transformation of rural communities with different ethnic structures of the population.

In many ways, the recorded post-Soviet differences are determined by the involvement of Russian ethnic rural communities simultaneously in the processes of urbanization and, above all, demographic modernization. The entire diversity of rural community's transformations can be described through universal variants of the rural community's transformation ("inertial" and "modernization"), reflecting the nature of changes in rural communities, and stages ("expansion", "from expansion to compression", "compression" and "disappearance in the previous format"), reflecting their scale of change.

The transformation of the majority of the surveyed ethnic rural communities has a modernization character (communities of the North Caucasus, the Volga region and Siberia), only a small number have an inertial character (for example, Russians and Ukrainians). More significant is the differentiation of ethnic rural communities in Russia, according to the current stage of transformation of rural settlements

(otherwise rural communities, since the population of each individual settlement is a separate local community). Ingush and many Dagestani communities are at the stage of "expansion", Bashkir, Buryat, Chuvash, Ossetian and Lezgin communities are at the stage of "from expansion to compression", Tatar and Lak communities are at the stage of "compression", and Russian, Ukrainian and Mordvin communities are at the stage of "disappearance in the previous format".

The concept of cycles is not applicable to the analysis of the ethnic rural communities' transformation, since we are talking about a fundamental change in the composition of communities as a result of their modernization. The revival/revitalization of settlements by new city dwellers—recreationists—does not contribute to the restoration of traditional elements and connections.

Field surveys of rural communities and data on the average size of a rural settlement have shown that there are certain deviations from the prevailing variant and stage of transformation among rural communities of one ethnic identity. They are usually associated with the action of local factors in the development of rural settlements (for example, the development of the economic base, the historical experience of local population mobility, the factor of human personality, etc.).

Examples of the transformation of Tatar and Chuvash, Avar, and Dargin rural communities located within territories with similar zonal characteristics and development conditions confirmed that these rural communities went through the same set of stages of rural community transformation with a certain time lag.

Competing interests

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