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Agriculture and Taboo: to the Problem of the Conflict of Identity of Hunting-Nomadic and Agricultural Outlooks

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For more than ten years the sphere of scientific interests of the author is worldviews of nomadic peoples of Eurasia. On this subject two monographs and more than fifty scientific papers were published. Studying the ideology of nomads, the author faced with the phenomenon of tough confrontation of sedentary and nomadic farming worldviews. One of the elements of this world outlook conflict is the taboo on occupation by agriculture in a number of archaic cultures.

Keywords: agriculture, taboo, neolytic revolution.

In some works of ours, we touched upon the phenomenon of identity hunting-nomadic and agricultural outlooks, best showed in the biblical story of Cain and Abel. Now we would like to examine the phenomenon of the ban on farming, inherent for a number of archaic cultures. But first let's remember how Cain and Abel conflict begins.

Eve, the first man Adam's wife, bore him Cain, "*and said: I have gotten a man from the Lord*". After birth of Abel – "*And Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground*". Next, each brother brings as a gift to God the fruits of their labors, and God accepts the sacrifice of Abel – "*the firstborn of his flock and of the fat thereof*", and does not accept Cain's sacrifice – "*the fruits of the earth*". Explanation of God concerning the adoption of the gifts is vague "*if you do well, won't you be accepted? But*

if you don't do well, sin is lying outside your door ready to attack. It wants to control you, but you must master it".

Let's begin with the assumption which no good deed Cain commits and what sin lies at his door. Cain is a farmer, his brother Abel – a herder. This is actually the answer to this question. Abel has natural labor; it is subject to the laws of nature, set, as the creators of the Old Testament thought, by God. The Jews themselves during the formation of the Old Testament were nomadic pastoralists. Cain is a tiller; the risk to the nomad is associated with his marginality. As noted by A. van Gennep, the danger lies in the transition state, in marginality in [3; p. 134]. Anyone in this state is a danger to himself and to others.

In the same situation participants of initiatory rituals in archaic societies appear. "During the marginal period between ritual

death and ritual rebirth, those who pass the initiation are temporarily in the position of exiles. During the ritual, they have no place in society. Sometimes they do go to live somewhere else. But sometimes they live close enough to allow random contacts between them and productive members of society. In this case, we find that they behave like dangerous criminals. They can attack, steal, and rob. Such behavior is even encouraged. Antisocial behavior is an appropriate expression of marginality of their condition. Be borderline is to come into contact with danger... [4; p. 147].

We also should mention inherent for archaic cultures, and in particular for old-Judaic [8; 11-15], ban for desecration. Abel, as a shepherd, is in contact with "clear" in terms of the Old Testament animals: sheep, goats, cattle. Contact with these animals did not require purification before entering a temple.

"In some sense people form an alliance with their land and their cattle, like God enters into an alliance with them. People emphasize the firstborn of their livestock; the Sabbath applies both to humans, and cattle. The cattle are domesticated literally, taken into the house as slaves. The animals should be included in the social order, so the blessing could touch them" [4; p. 89]. Considering the fact that the ancient Hebrews were originally nomads, and only later moved to agriculture, it can be assumed that their nomadic environment contained certain restrictions for agriculture, what we can see in other nations [16; p. 318-319]. We cannot insist on that, but there is a very interesting piece of Leviticus, which is worth quoting: "And every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth shall be an abomination; it shall not be eaten. Whatsoever goeth upon the belly, and whatsoever goeth upon all four, or whatsoever hath more feet among all creeping things that creep upon the earth, them ye shall not eat; for they are an abomination. [8; 11, 41-42].

This passage refers to the unclean animals of all reptiles, snakes, worms, lizards, etc., i.e. all who have obvious connection with land (Chthon). And could not any idea of uncleanness of chthonic animal be associated with impurity of the farmer in hunter's and nomad's mind?

In XIX century ethnographers recorded in some cultures hunting bans on agriculture. M. Eliade writes: "Smohalla, Uanapum tribal leader, refused to cultivate the land. He believed that to wound, cut, tear, scratch "our common mother" making farm work, is a great sin. He added: "You ask me to cultivate the land? But how can I take a knife and plunge it into the womb of his mother? After all, if I did, she would never take back my dead body. You ask me to loosen the soil and pull stones? But can I disfigure the mother's body, reaching down to the bones? If I did, I am no longer able to enter it to reborn again. You ask me to mow the grass, make hay, sell it and enrich like the white man? But how dare I hurt my mother's hair?" These words were spoken by less than a century ago, but they go far back into history" [16; p.318-31].

Here we see the traces of identity conflict generated by the Neolithic revolution. Taboos on agriculture, fixed in hunters and gatherers societies could hardly arise, if they hadn't farmers nearby, with their more than a strange practice.

But it's not so much a taboo, but the absence of the cultural paradigm of agriculture among hunters and gatherers. As the V.R. Cabo say "hunters Bororo treated crops of neighboring farmers like other gifts of nature – at every opportunity they snatched young cassava roots, baked and ate them" [6]. It is the lack of cultural paradigms that didn't allow a number of tribes of hunters and gatherers to make the transition to agriculture in the XIX century, though white colonists helped them. In some cases, hunters and gatherers ate immediately seeds for sowing handed out to them, and in others – exhumed

immature, young plants in white specialists' treated fields, and ate them on the spot.

In the XIX century Brazil's government has chosen for this experiment a hunter-gatherer tribe Bororo. They received arable land and seeds, fields were treated for them by experts sent by the government. Tribe received edibles in an amount sufficient to live up to the time of harvesting. But as soon as the Bororo became the proud owners of axes, as they began to fell trees that they previously had to climb on to get their fruits. Sugarcane plantations had to be guarded day and night, to save them from destruction, and cassava plantations were killed, as women accustomed to digging wild roots, ran to the fields with their digging sticks and removed non-mature tubers. [9; p.11-12].

"A missionary, who tried to attach an African hunter-gatherer tribe Vasekele simultaneously to the benefits of Christianity and to acquaint them with agriculture, was raised by the natives to laugh, and all his offers were rejected with such arguments: "Are monkeys starving? We know forests, and rivers, and streams. God wants us to have roamed freely, and there is no his will that we take the hoe" [9; p.12].

Aborigines of the island of Luzon refused to learn the art of growing plants, because "they do not want to stay in the same place" [9; p.12]. Even tribes persuaded to plant several kinds of vegetables, mostly left the landing area before harvest time. It is possible that rough and administrative methods commonly used by the colonial authorities and missionaries played some part; that could even lead to a rigid taboo on agriculture, which M. Eliade noted in North American Indian tribes.

Besides, we should note psychological factors. "Pygmies and farmers treated each other with some disdain, thinking the opposite side to be of second-class people or even animals", – M. Kozlovskaya told [7]. Bantu sometimes married

women from the forest tribe of pygmies, reverse marriages were never concluded. Pastoralists were more aggressive towards neighboring Bushmen – hunters and gatherers, as they needed to expand their pastures. And Bushmen experiencing pressure also took an aggressive stance, increasing cattle rustling. They had no wish to adopt this lifestyle: "Better one cow in the stomach than ten in the pen", they said [7]. Australian Aborigines of Cape York Peninsula and Torres Strait islanders communicated with Papua farmers and knew the principles of growing plants, but actually did not engage in farming [13; p.40].

Only under the influence of crisis factors, rather than economic efficiency, some tribes of hunters and gatherers in the XVIII-XIX centuries are gradually moving towards agriculture. At the end of the XIX century Bakairi tribes still remembered that their grandfathers "knew nothing of maize and cassava". And only an acute food crisis has forced Bakairi as well as Baynings to learn simplest methods of farming from their neighbors. Currently, hunting is their secondary, auxiliary production unit [6]. In recent years it became clear that many Bushmen, nomadic hunters and gatherers of Botswana were able to grow plants, but have done that only in rainy years, as during periods of drought they were not able to save the harvest.

On the Muralug Island at the beginning of the XIX century Muralug only a few men with socio-prestigious goals were growing yam, which was imported from New Guinea and did not play any significant role in the diet. But in the years 1848-1849 the traditional economy was in crisis (catch of turtles plummeted, and there was a poor harvest of wild yam), the locals started planting wild yam everywhere [13; p.40].

Indian prophet Smohalla's words that to wound, cut, tear, scratch "our common mother" making farm work, is a great sin [16; p.318], find

paradoxical parallels in the views of agricultural peoples. V. Toporov gives the example of Russian religious verse, which says that when people first began to cultivate land, she screamed with pain and furrows of plow filled with blood. Then God said land not to cry and not to bleed, and now feed the people – “but you will eat them all” [7; p.277]. Considering that the Russian spiritual verses contain enough archaic pre-Christian beliefs formation, the above verse is consistent with widespread among certain peoples views that Eliade gives: “Nomadic Bayta farmers, one of the primitive Dravidian tribes of Central India, sowed only in ash remaining on areas where the jungle burnt out.

They were not stopped even with the difficulties of this farming, because to cut their mother's breast with a plow they considering a sin. And some Altaic and Finno-Ugric peoples considered a terrible sin to pluck grass, because the earth is just as painful as a man whose hair or beard is pulled. Votyaks (Udmurtia), who according to custom, used pits for sacrificial, took care that the offerings were not made autumn, since at this time the earth is sleeping. Cheremisy (Mari) thought the earth was often sick, and during such periods avoided sitting on it. There is a lot of other evidence in preserving certain beliefs associated with the cult of the Earth Mother both in agricultural and non-agricultural tribes. The cult of earth, even if it is not, as some scientists believe, the oldest religion of man, is becoming obsolete quite difficult” [15; p.235].

It is worth pointing to another aspect. Abel's killing animals for food has no differences with similar acts of predators or hunters. Nowadays many primitive peoples consider life of a hunter more prestigious than the sedentary life of a farmer. A typical example: Colombian desana call themselves hunters, although 75% of their food they get by fishing and gardening. But in their eyes life of a hunter is an only real life [14; p.

50]. Primitive tribes often imagined the afterlife as a country of rich hunting grounds. V. Masson argues that hunting gave the Jeitun farmers of ancient settlements in Central Asia (V century BC) only 25% of animal food, the rest was supplied by pets [10; P. 121]. At the same time it is noteworthy that in one of dzheyntun settlements Pessedzhik-Depe wall paintings depicting hunting were found. Apparently, hunting images in the views of farmers continued to play an important sacred role.

V. Shnirelman notes: “In contrast to early hunters and gatherers, farmers had less diverse food, their diet most consisted of carbohydrates, and they experienced a protein deficiency, which could be only avoided engaged regularly in hunting and fishing. But developing agriculture remaining hunters and fishermen was impossible “[13; p.39]. Meat food acquired a special appeal for farmers. That's why meat and its production eventually received a special sense of social prestige. “Here lie causes of a paradoxical at first glance phenomenon when early farmers often considered hunting to be the most prestigious kind of work. So, Indians Desai living in the Northwest Amazon , considered themselves hunters and hunting here were associated with basic value orientation; although in practice hunting gave no more than a quarter of their daily diet, many men were more likely to engage in fishing, and the main source of food was agriculture” [13; p.39].

Historians observe the same phenomenon much later of the Don and the Zaporozhye Cossacks: some Cossacks and the whole of their association had the character of “earners”. Cossacks despised ploughmen and kept them apart. “Do not have wives, do not plow the land, feed from cattle, animal catching and fishing and in the old days had plunders obtained from neighbor peoples”. Cossacking was a special method of earning one's living, and Paprocki, who carols Cossacks as knights, recognized that

in the lower reaches of the Dnieper “saber brought more profits than household” [5].

Eliade notes: “In a few millennia after the victory of agricultural economy outlook of primitive hunters again affects the history. Invasion and conquest of Indo-Europeans and the Turkic-Mongols will be taken under the sign of the hunter, “predator”. Members of the Indo-European military alliances and nomadic horsemen of Central Asia treated settled population they attacked like predators – chasing, strangling and devouring steppe herbivores or livestock. Many Indo-European and Turkic- Mongol tribes wore eponyms of predatory animals (especially wolf) and had their origin from teriomorphic mythical ancestor.

Military initiation of Indo-European supposed ritual transformation into a wolf: a paradigmatic warrior assimilated predator behavior. Besides, persecution and killing a wild animal becomes mythological model of conquering a territory and establishment of the state. Assyrians, Iranians, and Turkic-Mongol had indistinguishably similar ways of hunting and war. Everywhere in the Eurasian world, from the appearance of the Assyrians before to newest times, hunting is a school and field testing, and favorite sport for sovereigns and military aristocracy...” [14; p.50-51]. Hunting is inheritance of noble estates, from the Egyptian Pharaohs to the aristocrats of Europe, an important part of their high life; in medieval England it was the main entertainment of the king and the Norman aristocracy between military campaigns and concerns of governing the country. This led to emergence of such a phenomena as the Royal forest or protected forest – forest in medieval Europe, owned by kings and subject to special forest feudal law, which was characterized by extremely harsh penalties for infringement of rights of the monarch for hunting and disposal of forest resources. The greatest development of the

royal institute of protected forests was in England end XI – beginning of XIII centuries.

Hundreds of thousands of years, man lived in a kind of mystical symbiosis with wildlife, left indelible marks. Moreover, orgiastic ecstasy is able to re-actualize religious behavior of ancient paleogominid – eating raw victim; this happened in Greece, among worshipers of Dionysus, or in the XX century among Moroccan ayssava [14; p.51].

Adam and Eve as the Old Testament says, lived a natural life gatherers in paradise gardens of Eden, and only became farmers when had been driven out: “Therefore the LORD God sent him (Adam) forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken” [2, 3, 23]. Agricultural labor is definitely interpreted by the Old Testament as an element of punishment for original sin.

Antinomy “farmer – herder” in cultures of the Ancient Orient is also manifested linguistically. Biblical Garden – Eden, is close to the Hebrew vocables e’den – “pleasure” and supposedly dates back to the Sumerian word edin – “plain“, “not plowed land”. The fact that for the nomad plowed land is associated with filth, sin and a violation of taboos, we reviewed in detail in our book “Mythologems of Neolithic revolution” [10].

Eden of ancient nomads is not-plowed fertile plains. As rightly noted “...the ancient Jews were eager to settle permanently in the fertile plains. But it is significant that they dreamed of lands “full with milk and honey” but not of the land of bountiful crops, like Egyptians thought were in after-life...

Organized states of the ancient Near East were agricultural, but the values of an agricultural commune are opposite values of a nomadic tribe, and in particular – its extreme type – desert nomads. Respect of settled farmers to impersonal power and dependency, coercion imposed by organized state means for the nomad

unbearable lack of personal freedom. Eternal worries of farmers about everything related to the phenomenon of growth, and his total dependence on these phenomena are a form of slavery for a nomad. Moreover, for him a desert is clean, and the picture of life, which at the same time is a picture of rotting, is disgusting” [13, p.291].

To drive to some place a crowd of peasants were for nomadic Mongols as naturally as to drive a herd of cattle, and their language was designated them in the same terms. [8, p. 92]. In his paper, D. Weatherford many times stated that the Mongols of Genghis Khan hated lifestyle of farmers itself.

Thus, during capture of North China, “the Mongols not only systematically burned the cities, but also spent much time and labor to destruction of irrigation systems, which led to the complete abandonment of large areas”. [8, p.119] Nomads of Genghis Khan “came not to conquer and control, but to kill, destroy and plunder...” – says William Durant in his multi-volume “History of Civilization” [1, p.340]. Mongols “not only leveled cities to the ground and destroyed castles, but also cut down vineyards, burnt orchards, trampled fields” [8, p.148].

Actions of a farmer are strange and even unnatural in terms of worldview of a hunter and nomad. He pollutes and wounds the earth; digging it, he “buries” the grain and waits until it “resurrects”, he destroys the grain, turning it into flour and bread.

Maybe that’s why labor of the farmer, as he himself was scorned at all times. As Pierre Monte writes in his book “Egypt of Ramses”: “The scribe despised anyone engaged in physical work, but below all he put the farmer. With their work, farmers wore as fast as their tools. They were beaten and mercilessly exploited by hosts and tax collectors, they were robbed and plundered by neighbors and looter, weather misled them,

locusts and rodents revenged them, they set themselves against all the enemies of the human race – this was the fate of the farmer. His wife could be thrown in jail, children picked for debt. Farmer was a complete image of an unfortunate man...” [11; p.103]. Contempt for the farmer we see in another ancient Egyptian text “Instructions Ahto, son of Duauf” [1; p.87-88]. A few thousand years later treatment to farmers has not changed: “sullen animals, males and females are scattered throughout the country; dirty and deathly pale, burnt with sun, chained to the ground they dig and shovel with indomitable perseverance; they even possess a kind of gift of articulate speech, and when straightened they show human faces, and they really people. At night they return to their lairs, where they live on black bread, water and roots” [17; p.57- 60] – wrote about the French peasants of his time in the XVII century Jean de La Bruyere.

Here we come close to realization – detection– of a crucial stage separating the nomad hunter from sedentary farmer. Difference in their employment was only external, not very significant difference. Depth of the socio-psychological incompatibility and conflict of identity was different.

A farmer lived in the state, each member of which in some sense abandoned the natural human right to self-defense and entrusted it to someone else: a soldier, policeman, a judge, a guard, a king, a jailer, an executioner. Free from the problems of civil and military administration, the farmer could all his time and energy spend for useful work. Not like nomad hunter. Within the tribal structure he retains all the rights and responsibilities of self-defense – for himself, his family, his tribe. He is a warrior, bravely going to fight with any foreigner. He is also a judge who knows the laws and customs of fathers; he monitors their performance in his family and neighbors.

He is also an executioner, performing the execution of "sentence" on the offender. He is a supreme ruler, the tribal council deciding when to attack the enemy or a rich caravan, and when to retreat to a safe shelter. This is a key difference, and it the main obstacle to the transition of nomadic peoples to settled agriculture. A nomad could learn from a farmer land plowing and irrigation techniques, could sweat harvesting and construction of the house, haying for cattle. But he could not and did not want to part with his sacred rights, which gave him a membership in the tribe

with its extensive "social I-can" [4, p.162-163]". A farmer, with all his richness, was in the eyes of a nomad a disenfranchised poor fellow who has lost his sense of honor, because he waived his right to defend his honor and freedom in arms. This blatant contempt, beggar and backward nomad showed a prosperous farmer, was noted a thousand times in memoirs and travel books. Pride of a Bedouin, Mongol, Indian, Circassian became proverbial, forced the civilized world to show respectful cautious towards hunters and nomads" [4, p.163].

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**Земледелие и табу:
к проблеме конфликта идентичности
охотничье-кочевого
и земледельческого мировоззрений**

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Вот уже более десяти лет сферой научных интересов автора статьи являются мировоззренческие установки кочевых народов Евразии. По данной проблематике были опубликованы две монографии и более полусотни научных статей. Изучая идеологию кочевников, автор столкнулся с феноменом жесткого противостояния мировоззрений представителей оседлого и кочевого земледелия. Одним из элементов этого мировоззренческого конфликта является табу на занятие земледелием в ряде архаических культур.

Ключевые слова: земледелие, неолитическая революция, табу.
