

THE NOGAYS

The self-designation *nogai* (*noghai*) derives from the name of one man. Nogay, grandson to Genghis Khan, was an outstanding chieftain and, although he did not possess the khan's title, the real leader of the Golden Horde. He was the ruler of the Nogay Horde west of the Danube, the domain of his nomadic subjects. Nogay was killed either in the year 1294 or, according to other sources, 1300, but his name remained, denoting the vagrant people in the steppes by the sea of Azov. In the earlier Russian texts the Nogays were referred to as the North Caucasian Tatars.

Habitat: The Nogays live as scattered linguistic enclaves forming no single ethnic or administrative unit. There existed a sizable group in the Nogay Steppes but in 1957 they were divided against their will between three administrative units: the Dagestan Autonomous SSR, the Chechenian-Ingush Autonomous SSR and the Stavropol District. Administrative policy of this nature has further accelerated the tendency towards cultural decline and loss of national identity among the Nogays. At present the largest number of Nogays lives in North Caucasia, having moved there from the Moldova/Roumania border and the Astrakhan area. In North Caucasia they have settled down in a) the Karachayevo-Cherkess Autonomous region, where according to rough estimates, around 20,000 Nogays are living, b) the Karamurzin and Kangly villages of the Kochubeyevsk and Mineralnye Vody Districts and in the Neftekumsk and Achikulak Districts of the Stavropol Area, c) the northern Dagestan: Nogay and Kizlyar Districts of the Dagestan Autonomous SSR and the Shelovsk District of the Chechenian-Ingush Autonomous SSR. Another minor group of the Nogays lives in Tatarskaya Slobodka near the town of Novocherkassk. The Astrakhan and Crimean Nogays, as well as a number of the Dagestan Nogays (the Khasav-Yurt and the Baba-Yurt) are at present undergoing linguistic assimilation with the local population.

Population: according to census data, was 34,000 in 1926; 41,200 in 1959 (incl. 17,600 in the Stavropol Area and 14,900 in the Dagestan Autonomous SSR); 52,000 in 1970, among whom 46,000 spoke their native language, and 59,546 in 1979.

According to various estimates, the Nogay population amounted from 60,000 to 80,000 in 1990. The presence and standing of the Nogays on their historical territories has decreased.

Language: The Nogay language belongs to the Kipchak or Northwestern Group of the Turkic languages, comprising with Kara-Kalpak and Kazakh the Kipchak-Nogay subgroup. Nogay is one of the less-studied Turkic languages. According to N. Baskakov, the Nogay language divides into three dialects: a) the Kara-Nogay (Turkic *kara* -- 'black') dialect, spoken in the Nogay District in Dagestan, on the lower reaches of the River Kuma and in the area between the Lower Kuma and Lower Terek in North Dagestan, b) the Nogay Proper spoken in the Achikulak and Neftekumsk Districts of the Stavropol Area, (the speakers of these two dialects together make up the so-called Steppe Nogay Group), c) the Aknogay dialect (Turkic *ak* -- 'white': Turkic peoples have commonly divided their tribes into black and white, 'black' meaning 'northern' and 'white' 'western') by the River Kuban and its tributaries in Karachayevo-Cherkess and in the Kangly village of the Mineralnye Vody District (13,200 speakers). The Kara-Nogay and Nogay Proper dialects are comparatively

close linguistically while the Aknogay dialect stands somewhat apart. Dialectal differences are the result of a long geographical separation. Contact with neighbouring ethnic groups has also had an influence on the development of dialects. The Kara-Nogay have always interacted with Russians and Armenians, and the Kuban Nogay, that is, the Aknogay, with Russians, Cherkess, Abazians and Karachay. Countless contacts have left their deep impression on the language and culture of the Kuban Nogay.

In the Astrakhan Region, on the lower reaches of the Volga there live some 30,000 people of Nogay origin, falling into four ethnic groups: the Yurt (the Privolzhsk District), the Kundrovets (the village of Tuluganovka), the Karagash (Krasnoyarsk and neighbouring districts) and the Utar-Alabugaty (the areas adjoining the Kalmyk Autonomous SSR). The ancestors of the Yurts, Kundrovets and Utar-Alabugaty who came originally from the Great Nogay Horde, moved to the environs of Astrakhan in the early 17th century to avoid the Kalmyks. The Karagash who settled here in the late 18th century had come from the Small Nogay Horde by the Kuban. Yurt connections with their North-Caucasian kinsfolk were severed in the middle of the 17th century, and with the Karagash a century later. The cultural and linguistic impact of the Mid-Volga (Kazan and Mishar) Tatars has been strong upon the Yurts, somewhat weaker upon the Karagash. In the years 1931--1943 the Narimanovsk District comprised the Tatar-Nogay National Territory. In the 1939 census most of the Nogays were registered as Tatars. Since the early 1970s the desire for ethnic self-preservation has strengthened, especially among the Karagas. One of the reasons for this has been the deterioration of the environment. In the 1989 census some thousands of the Lower-Volga Nogays (mainly the Karagash) registered as Nogays.

No attention has been paid to modernizing the Nogay villages. Roads, where they exist, are primitive; communications even more so. It is not unusual that because of impassable roads in spring and autumn village children miss school for weeks at a time. In many villages water-supplies are deficient. The result is that the Nogay have begun to leave their historical areas of residence for Stavropol, the Moscow region, in the north, for Astrakhan and Khabarovsk.

At present (1990) two newspapers -- *The Path of Lenin* and *The Steppe Lighthouse* -- are issued in the Nogay language. Due to poor road conditions and ill-managed communications their distribution is not wide.

Until 1957, the Nogay language was taught everywhere in the first five years at school. Now, however, in Stavropol, for example, the teaching of Nogay has been either ceased altogether or continues only on an optional basis at primary school level. Optional lessons are not attended or are attended without notable enthusiasm. In the Nogay District in Dagestan the teaching of Nogay has continued but suffers from a lack of teachers: the Nogay Pedagogical School in the town of Kizlyar closed down long ago. There is evidence that the training of Nogay teachers has resumed. Due to the low prestige of their native language among Nogay youths there are difficulties in forming full study groups at the Karachayev-Cherkessk Pedagogical Institute.

Kindergartens are conducted in Russian even in those regions where the Nogays form a substantial majority of the population (except in the Nogay District in Dagestan). Pidginization is notable among the young. By now, the Nogays have acknowledged

the impending danger of extinction for their language and they have begun to demand the obligatory teaching of their native language at school. There has been discussion of native-language-based teaching at experimental primary schools but there is considerable unwillingness at an official level to support or subsidize Nogay culture.

The influence of Russian is extensive and is evident at all levels of the language, including phonetics. Russian-Nogay relations, based on trade, have a centuries-long history. Relations deteriorated during the Civil War when the Nogay Steppe filled with Russian refugees from the Terek region who decided to settle, but at length the hostility died. Knowledge of Russian among the Nogay spread and a number of villages with a mixed population appeared.

In recent times several waves of migration have swept Nogay territories. The first of these, in the 1960s, came from other regions of Caucasia. Massive migration also occurred in the 1970s and 1980s. The relations of the Nogays with the recent settlers in the Nogay Steppe are strained and extremely inflammable. The reasons for conflict are primarily economic. An especially destabilizing influence has been the immigration of the Dargwas from Dagestan. The Dargwas have in places superseded the Nogays in livestock breeding. The rate of unemployment is high among the Nogays. A similar replacement of the Nogay people, mainly by Russians and Dargwa, is under way in administrative offices. In search of better living conditions Nogay families have begun to leave their historical areas of residence. The recent Russian settlers consider the Nogay people uncivilized and scorn their language. However, relations between the Nogays and the Dargwas are considered the most inflammable. The possibility of an armed exchange is not inconceivable. The situation is being exacerbated by the arrival of Meshed Turks on the Nogay Steppe.

As mentioned, the Nogays live dispersed in a number of administrative units. They have no centre for the promotion and coordination of cultural activities. The Nogays have no national theatre or song and dance ensemble, whereas many other ethnic minorities of the area possess both. Recently, a few fledgling groups have appeared but there are attempts to discredit them as extremists. There is a movement towards autonomous government calling for a restitution of autonomy within the bounds of 1957. The Nogays appealed to the Soviet central authorities with a petition. The push towards autonomy will probably meet with strong opposition from Dagestan and other neighbouring republics lest they should lose their vast pastures on the Nogay Steppe. It has been proposed that even establishing Nogay national village soviets and districts (in the Karachayevo-Cherkessk Autonomous SSR, for example) might considerably ease the strain in relations between these nations.

Origin and history: The origins of the people are related to the famous Nogay Horde in the 13th and 14th centuries, the Golden Horde, and the Kipchak tribal confederacies. In the first half of the 17th century a number of Nogay tribes were nomadic on the steppes between the Danube and the Caspian. The invasion of the warlike Kalmyks forced several of the Nogay tribes to leave their home steppes and withdraw to the foothills of the North Caucasus. By the River Kuban they met with the Cherkess. In the Moscow chronicles from the 16th and 17th centuries there are several mentions of the Nogay, including the two Nogay Hordes, the Great and the Small. The former roamed beyond the River Volga, the latter somewhat to the west. Both had numerous military encounters with the Russians. In the 17th century some

of the Nogay chiefs entered into an alliance with Moscow and fought at times together with the Russians against the Kabardians, the Kalmyks and peoples of Dagestan. They also took part in the expeditions of Peter I. Since the early 19th century the majority of the Nogays have settled in North Caucasia.

The Nogays still exhibit the traces of division into three tribal groups.

Ethnic culture: Before their migration to North Caucasia the countless Nogay tribes led a nomadic life. The different tribes were brought together by shared political and economic interests. In North Caucasia the tribes began to lose their former structure and mix with one another. The Kara-Nogays continued as nomads until the establishment of Soviet power. The Kuban Nogays became settled much earlier, in the late 18th century, along the Greater and Smaller Zelenchuk Rivers and the Lower Uruk and Laba. The nomadic way of life has left a conspicuous mark on Nogay economies and culture. The methods of livestock husbandry are similar to that of the Kazakh and other Central Asian peoples. Throughout the centuries horsebreeding has been of great importance -- horses were used for transport in the vast steppes, battles were fought by cavalry, horse-milk was drunk and horsemeat was served as food. Horses were sold annually to Moscow. After settling, agriculture rose to prime importance among the Kuban Nogays.

On Nogay farms, both collective and private, livestock breeding is the chief occupation, agriculture being only auxiliary, camel-breeding once flourished but it was completely eradicated in the 1960s and 1970s. Since the end of World War II, canals have been built to irrigate the land, however, in recent years the total area of pastureland possessed by the Nogays has diminished. This is due to the fact that the neighbouring Georgians, Avars, Dargwas and Lakks drive their cattle across Nogay pastures. Also, in the Stavropol Area large plots of arable land have been ented to Koreans.

Writing: Formerly the Nogay written language was based on the Arabic alphabet. In 1928 the Latin alphabet was introduced. The first spelling book based on Latin alphabet was published in 1929, in Moscow, followed by schoolbooks, several dictionaries of terminology and an ortographic manual. The ortographic system, based on the Latin alphabet, was compiled by the Nogay academic, A. Dzhaniyev (Canibek) proceeding from principles adopted for all Turkic languages. It was founded on a phonetic principle. The creation of a new ortography reinforced Nogay linguistic studies. The difficulty was in finding a suitable dialectal basis for the written language. Finally, the Kara-Nogay dialect spoken in Dagestan was adopted as the foundation, on the grounds that this was the language of the "Nogay working masses". The fact that the founders of the alphabet and orthography were living in Dagestan was also a matter of no little importance. After a while it turned out that lexical differences from the Kuban Nogay dialect were abundant. The Dagestan dialect contains a lot of arabicisms and tatarisms. Therefore the dialectal basis was revised and by 1936 a new project for a literary language was envisaged but the time for putting it into practice ran out -- under the inspiring guidance of the North Caucasian Regional Committee for Introducing the New Alphabet a transition to the Russian alphabet began.

In 1938 this transition was enforced, which, according to N. Gadzhieva, gave an impetus to education and set a native written press on its legs. The orthography based on the Latin alphabet had allegedly been an impediment to learning Russian. Spelling international (read: Russian) words according to the Turkic phonetics was declared improper practice. Adopting Russian loan-words without any assimilation, practically in an unchanged form, is considered a great advantage to the Nogay language. Thus the introduction of the Russian alphabet constituted a violation of the language, a premediated programme to gradually undermine its very structure and destroy it.

In the Nogay District in Dagestan, the Nogay language and literature are on the school curriculum from the 1st to the 10th year, they are also taught at the Karachayevo-Cherkess Pedagogical School and the national branch of the Pedagogical Institute. Nogay is not an official language, nevertheless, it is the main medium for giving "political and ideological education to the Nogays", as stated in the *Grammar of the Nogay Language* published in 1973. Nogay is not taught in other districts.

Nogay linguistic research is conducted by the Institute for Historical, Linguistic and Literary Studies in Cherkessk. One of the fruits of this establishment is a Russian-Nogay dictionary, edited by N. Baskakov and published in 1956.

By 1973, two small newspapers were being published -- one in Karachayevo-Cherkessk and another in the Nogay District of the Dagestan Autonomous SSR. However, because of poor communications, as well as sheer official indifference, these papers did not reach Nogay villages. Cultural activity in the village has ceased to exist. There is no Nogay theatre.

There are some signs of a growing national consciousness among the Nogays of the Lower Volga. Since the year 1989/90 some schools of the region, including one city school in Astrakhan, have taught optional courses in native literature. A Nogay Culture Club has been founded in the Astrakhan Region. The all-Union Nogay society *Birlik* has made its debut.