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MODERN APPROACHES TO PRESERVE HISTORICAL AND
CULTURAL LEGACY OF KALMYKS

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Abstract

The relevance of the research is determined by modern trends in the understanding of historical and cultural heritage. Within the trends historical and cultural heritage is believed to contribute both to translating knowledge and preserving historical memory as the basis of national identification in the modern globalization process and utilising the heritage as a tool to stabilize the situation in the region and in the economic perspective of its sustainable development. Recently, there has been a significant increase in scientific interest to nomadism from the perspective of the civilizational approach. Nowadays the approach helps to understand unique features of the nomadic system and their ways to develop and adapt to the environment. The problems of the study of nomadic societies and cultures of nomadic type as well as different conceptual approaches are still urgent and give rise to further research in this area. In view of this, the diverse historical and cultural (archaeological, artefact, folklore, manuscript) heritage of the Kalmyks that led a nomadic life is of particular interest. The peoples have been living in the South of Russia, in steppe areas for more than 400 years. To solve the problem and develop theoretical approaches to the study and preservation of historical and cultural heritage of the Kalmyks, it is necessary to clarify the existing concepts about its individual aspects and its current state. There is a great demand for developing empirical research and new approaches and methods as well as improving traditional ones in this area.

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1. Introduction

The research and preservation of the historical and cultural heritage of the peoples of Russia that has cumulated the intellectual culture of the ethnos and ethnic groups is of great cognitive and axiological value. At present, the preservation and updating of the historical and cultural heritage of the Russian peoples are laid special emphasis on since there are ethnic groups, the Kalmyks are among them that are in danger of extinction due to changes in their traditional lifestyle, occupation, economic structure, social conditions. On the territory of Kalmykia there are 341 historical and cultural monuments that include 51 objects of archaeological heritage. Both intensive economic activity on the territory of the Republic of Kalmykia and negative environmental conditions created obvious risks of loss of many civilizational and specific features inherent in the culture of the peoples living in these territories. There is a threat of disappearing historical and cultural heritage. In today's dynamically developing social conditions caused by the era of globalization, the issues of ethnic self-identity are becoming increasingly important. The interest in the national cultural heritage in the process of enculturation and introduction to the cultural values and concepts allows people to identify themselves in the modern society. In particular, the issues at hand are preservation of the Kalmyk ethnic group's linguistic and cultural identity.

In this regard, there is a need to understand the phenomenon of historical and cultural heritage of the Kalmyks nomads in the socio-cultural space of modern Russia: their social evolution and historical development, problems of adaptation and moving towards settled lifestyle, the influence of sedentarization on the process of socio-economic development, the interaction of the Kalmyks with neighbouring sedentary peoples and societies. In the changing world historical and cultural heritage is also becoming an important economic factor. It is a key element of the tourism industry that contributes to preserving historical memory and historical and cultural visual environment of the country taken as a whole and regionally.

2. Problem Statement

Various aspects and issues of the history and culture of nomadic pastoral societies, the interpretation and definition of the main characteristics of the stadial transformational growth and civilizational development of nomadism have been studied in detail by domestic and foreign researchers. The modern stage is connected with the rethinking and change of scientific paradigms as well as with development and mainstreaming of new approaches to study nomadism. The history of studying the problems of nomadic societies was analysed in the works by Kradin (2015; 2016), Trepavlov (2015). There are some contentious views on the history of the nomadic peoples of Central Asia that are presented in the works by Bazarov (2015), Danilov (2013; 2014), Dashibalov (2005), Dugarov (2011), Zoryktuev (2016; 2017), Klyashtorny (2012 a; 2012 b), Kradin, and Skrynnikova (2006).

Theoretical aspects of historical and cultural heritage have been studied by foreign and domestic researchers: Baller (1987), Bell, and Patterson (2009), Zamyatin (2010), Kalai, Kwan, and Affleck (2007), Kasten (2002), Klimov (2011), Kuryanova (2011), Kameron (2007), Navrud, and Redi (2002), Smith (2006-2007), Hoffman (2006).

A critical review of historiography of the issue shows that there are integrated theoretical and hands-on approaches in the field of preservation and research of historical and cultural heritage of nomadic communities at the regional level.

There is a modern field of science in our country that studies nomadic groups where "the theory of nomadic civilizations" is being actively developed. Its subject area elucidates a fairly wide range of problems of historical and cultural processes in nomadic societies. Currently, there is a rather large methodological variation in studying the stated problems in oriental historiography of the country. The modern theory of nomadic civilizations is in the process of self-determination. It is caused by the ambiguity of one of the key concepts of this civilization theory. There is a methodological polarization of views on the nature of nomadic societies as well there is no holistic view on the historical development of nomads. In the research literature, many problems related to the history of nomadic cattle breeding and nomadic communities have become a subject of long and numerous discussions. This problem is of interdisciplinary nature and requires keeping track of historical, ethnographic, archaeological, socio-economic and environmental aspects.

3. Research Questions

The roots of the scientific problem involve considering the historical and cultural (tangible and intangible) heritage of the modern Kalmyks. As for the genesis and the main aspects of the stated problem, the historical and cultural heritage appears as a sandwich-type composition: the concept "historical and cultural community" in the context of the research reflects the aggregate of historical and cultural, geographical, socio-political, axiological and ideological aspects. It has many temporary layers where the material and intellectual culture of related ethnic groups in different periods of their development are reflected. It mirrors both ancient forms of beliefs and later Buddhist influence. It shows rudiments of ancient rites and therefore ethnographic details as well as characteristics of not so distant periods. The study of the regional features of the Buddhist heritage of the Kalmyks is also an important point in the analysis of common historical and cultural problems when determining the role and place of Buddhism in the system of the world civilization.

The basic layer in the integrated model of the analysis of historical and cultural heritage is presented by archaeological evidence and architectural monuments. They include existing or lost remains of buildings, ruins of ancient cities, settlements, sites; religious buildings (temples, monasteries, stupas), existing and already lost ones. It is necessary to describe the objects of intangible heritage in more depth and detail, for example, folklore presented verbally and non-verbally in myths, legends, epic tales, folktales, benevolence, paroemias, etc., or folk knowledge embodied in rites, rituals and holidays.

It is fundamental to develop a set of measures and return the priority of the Russian science to study the Kalmyk epic as well as to promote the issue of recognition of folklore epopoeia "Jangar" as a cultural heritage of the UNESCO. Special attention should be paid to memorial sites, cultural and natural landscapes referred to ethnic history of the Kalmyks Oirat Mongols, military events and the life of prominent historical figures. Such objects as household items and art, handwritten monuments are also an important part of the historical and cultural heritage.

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this article is to articulate the problem and develop integrated approaches aimed at solving the problems of identifying the dominants of the historical and cultural heritage of the Kalmyks as well as their systematic description.

5. Research Methods

As for the methodological background, this research is a way to provide a comprehensive view of the topic. The interdisciplinary and integrated approach to solving the current research problems makes it possible to synthesize all relevant aspects of the study of historical and cultural heritage of the Kalmyks and to consider them from a holistic perspective.

6. Findings

The research suggests that the current crisis condition of the Kalmyk ethnic group was caused by cultural losses dating back to XIX-XX centuries through, primarily, the loss of the language. There was a process of acculturation that had a great influence and triggered the moving of Kalmyks nomads from nomadic to sedentary lifestyle and led to groundbreaking changes in the social and economic structures of the society. The factor caused the disappearance of many aspects of the traditional nomadic lifestyle. The industrialization of the Soviet period was marked by atheistic policies and led to the destruction of traditional religious institutions. Soviet ideology with new foundations of secularization and collectivization of society was imposed on massively. It should be noted that the greatest damage to the cultural identity of the Kalmyks was caused during their deportation in 1943-1957. The subsequent return of the people from the exile and restoring their statehood within Kalmyk Autonomous Republic are marked by the rise of national consciousness. Meanwhile, in the 1980s it became clear that educational and cultural priorities of the Soviet socialist system was disastrous for languages and cultures, national policies of small indigenous groups such as the Kalmyks (Badmaev & Kichikova, 2008, p. 211).

In the post-Soviet period since the early 1990s there appeared benevolent signs and some attempts were taken to change and boost the national policy with the tendency to revive the language and folk culture. In the Republic national classes and centres of folk art were established. Festivals of ethnic cultures were organized to celebrate national holidays (Jangariada, Tsagan Sar). In the meanwhile, Buddhism returned its positive value to restore the religious culture (traditions, medicine, astrology, rites, rituals and practices). Buddhist domestic institutions having close ties with foreign Buddhist institutions contributed to the development of Buddhology in the leading scientific Asian and Mongolian Studies Centres (Omakaeva, 2000; Bakaeva, 2014).

Currently, there is a tendency to promote ethnic culture to the middle age and young generations of the Kalmyks. Traditional family ties, pedigrees and genealogies, ancestral rites, rites and rituals related to life cycles (births, weddings, etc.), folk beliefs, national and religious holidays play an important role in maintaining the day-to-day life of the Kalmyk society.

At the same time, one of the most urgent and sophisticated problems of modern times is the loss of continuity in passing traditional cultural values on to the next generation. It results in misunderstanding, underestimation, and often in rejection and in the loss of ethnic culture. This refers to the traditional Kalmyk

folklore where the processes of reproduction and perception are considered to be a driving force. Without intergenerational continuity, traditional folklore ceases to transmit meanings, values, attitudes and becomes a rudiment of culture. We observe the loss of transmitting the experience of telling folktales and heroic epos as well as singing long-drawn-out songs, "ut dun" in their ritual way. Furthermore, there is a lost tradition of performing hymnal canticle of religious content "chastr dun". Folk games, riddles, legends, oral traditions, beliefs are considered to be an integral part of traditional knowledge systems but they do not accomplish their educational and ethno-pedagogical function to the full extent any more. Objects of material culture being its physical evidence and reflecting the mentality, traditions, ideas about the world and the way of life of the Kalmyks (family relics, objects of traditional nomadic life such as utensils, costumes, jewellery, etc.) are threatened.

It ought to be remarked that researchers of the Kalmyk Scientific Centre of RAS and Kalmyk State University are actively working for preserving and promoting the historical and cultural heritage of the Kalmyks. Interdisciplinary scientific folklore-ethnographic, archaeological expeditions are carried out where specialists from different Russian and foreign research centres are involved. They process the material of field studies and present them in serial publications since field studies results are of great scientific and cultural significance. The rapid disappearance of traditional folklore makes the studies more and more vital as the number of people who knows and share the cultural values decreases owing to natural life cycle processes. In 2008, the series "Treasures of ancestors" that introduces readers to the folklore repertoire of the best storytellers and folklore connoisseurs was founded in the Kalmyk Scientific Centre of RAS. There researchers are working to facilitate the fundamental project "The Code of Kalmyk folklore" to publish the best examples of oral folk art of the Kalmyk people. Within the current scientific trends, archival materials are being digitized and collected to create a data bank of the oral culture texts of the Kalmyks.

Today, Kalmykia is one of the few regions in Russia that has preserved their oral storytelling tradition as the genetic memory and experience inherited from their ancestors. In order to preserve the unique cultural heritage in the Republic of Kalmykia the decree of President of Kazakhstan K. Ilyumzhinov "on the state support for the study and development of Kalmyk folk epic "Jangar " (September 23, 1996) was issued. Moreover, a scientific program for the preservation, study and promotion of the epic "Jangar" was developed and the Republican Council was established. The epic is included in the program of secondary schools and Kalmyk State University. The epic "Jangar" has been studying for nearly 70 years by the scientists of the Kalmyk Scientific Centre of RAS and Kalmyk State University. "Jangar" is exposed to scientific scrutiny in many Research institutions in Russia and abroad. For the past several years, the Republic has hosted "Jangariada" and festivals of telling folktales "Jangara", there appeared a school for young Jangar followers.

However, despite the measures taken to preserve and revive the Kalmyk heroic epic "Jangar" in the country, in the context of globalization the unique oral storytelling tradition is on the verge of extinction and therefore causes serious concern among the world community. In addition, in recent years, the authorities of the Republic of China and Mongolia have raised the issue of recognizing the epic "Jangar" as UNESCO world heritage of intangible culture. The version of the Xinjiang Kalmyks that left Russia in 1771 was published in China only in 1980. Since then, they have conducted research in the field of the epic

"Jangar". They do much to promote and develop it. It became known that in 2018-2019 Chinese authorities together with Mongolia intended to include the epic "Jangar" in the UNESCO world heritage list of intangible culture. In this regard, researchers and cultural communities of China and Mongolia organize events to gather some material and popularize the epic "Jangar".

According to the mentioned above, It is necessary to continue to search for the ways to solve the problem of recognizing "Jangar" as Russia's heritage and take mutual efforts (Russia, the Republic of China and Mongolia) to enrol the heroic epic on the world heritage list of intangible culture of the UNESCO. It will contribute to preserving and developing the unique folk oral and poetic phenomena. It will help protect the heritage from the negative trends of the world globalization and the Russian Federation will preserve the priority of the territory where the epic is the most widespread.

A universal database on the disappearing material of traditional cultural heritage is highly demanded for the researchers to monitor and analyse changes in real-time mode. One can use the open access information on the special website as a source for educational, research and promotional purposes.

There science-based practical recommendations for the preservation of historical and cultural heritage are also developed. Thus, one of the urgent tasks is to create a universal integrated information system as a basis for the preservation and scientific research of historical and cultural heritage. Needless to say, such a complex problem should be solved in several stages. At the first stage, the theoretical and methodological principles of the information system will be worked out. It is important to create specialized databases through the construction of infrastructure (introduction of information technologies), digitization of tape recordings and archival material: full-text, bibliographic, sound, graphic, documentary-factual and multimedia ones. The latter have a special role to play in the scientific as well as in the cultural and educational space of Kalmykia.

The research revealed the need to organize rescue archaeological excavations: archaeological finds from the steppe mounds allow exploring the world of ancient nomads, understanding and imagining the way of life that nomadic tribes led in the distant past, learn their preferences and views.

The prospects of the research are determined by the fact that the practical results can be used for the solution of specific social and economic problems in a scientific way, especially in education: to form a clear view of students about the diversity of historical and cultural heritage, the importance of reliable knowledge and its reference to the role of heritage in scientific, cultural, educational and nurturing activities. The model of complex study of historical and cultural heritage developed within the research will be provided with recommendations to implement this model in the Republic of Kalmykia and to share the experience with other regions of Russia.

7. Conclusion

The fundamental nature of the stated problems is determined by the degree of flexibility of the main issues of historical and cultural heritage of the regions of Russia. And it is connected to the capability of transformation, modernization and adaptation to the new Russian social and cultural environment.

One of the upcoming trends in developing strategies for promoting territories is the exploring and interpreting the historical and cultural heritage as a reference point to strategize social policy aimed at maintaining sustainable development of territories. While being historically and geographically localized,

the heritage creates a basis for local ideology and territorial identity. It provides resources for the implementation of cultural and educational programs as well as for building brands, promoting tourism and other related sectors of the economy. The Republic of Kalmykia has a rich historical and cultural heritage. In our view, it should become one of the core resources for the social and economic development of the region. There are unique natural monuments, special protection national territories, rich vegetation and rare ornithofauna in Kalmykia. It is the territory where there were paths of Great Silk Way; the Khazars lived there and the Golden Horde built their settlements. This place is considered to be the great historical crossroads and the geographical centre of Euro-Asian continent.

From the point of view of its role and place in the life of the modern society, historical and cultural heritage is a complex socio-cultural system that is closely interlaced with the environment and time while transmitting information changing in time and space. It is heritage that underlies the information codes providing the "production", cumulation and transmission of information in the human civilization. Thus, there is a system of interrelations between culture, heritage and information that functions so that to reproduce the achievements of culture for new generations. Consequently, it is necessary to develop appropriate strategies and diverse approaches that would preserve the wealth of national culture and pass its diversity on to future generations.

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