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**ON THE MENTALITY AND BEING OF THE MOUNTAINEERS IN
THE NARTIAD**

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Abstract

The question of the spiritual and practical dominant of the national culture is already being raised today by scientists and public figures. National features and national peculiarities are most clearly reflected in the ethical and aesthetic system of the mountaineers, which is embodied in the works of oral folk art of the peoples of the Caucasus. This article considers the reflection of the specificity of folklore in the context of the national mentality, symbolism of objects, religious activities, rituals in the language in the aspect of preserving the oldest matrices of national consciousness. The study of cultural heritage requires the treatment of folklore as spiritual traditions of the people, and not as remnants of the past. The authors hope that a comprehensive study of the language of ritual folklore will allow understanding the specifics of folklore in terms of the national mentality. The paper presents linguistic, folklore and ethnographic sources as the basis for a special ritual understanding of space, for the reconstruction of the mythological worldview. It is believed that each national integrity is a metacode of the national ontology, covering and explaining all the areas of life of a given society. Based on the law of a correlation between the surrounding world and specific features of mentality, it can be stated that the essence of the Ossetians determines the archetype of the mountains, and the ecosystem is responsible for their mentality and character. The authors offer a slightly different interpretation of the three-functional system of Nartiada.

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Keywords: National mentality, ethnic culture, ritual folklore, metacode, vertical principle, spatial code.



1. Introduction

Socio-economic processes, the state of natural resources and environmental safety in the North Caucasus region in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries are due to globalization, which causes tangible changes in the semantic structure of the cultural and historical experience of the people, which is the most important source of cultural and historical information.

The problem of “globalization and ethnoculture”, which includes the gradual erasure and loss of traditional features, features of the national way of life and strengthening the reduction of mythopoetic thinking, is identical in the conditions of globalization in the North Caucasus region; naturally, their causes and consequences are the same. This means that the search for ways is universal. One thing is clear: the priority for today is the preservation of natural nature, national identity and the health of citizens.

In genuine interest to the national and historical past, to the ritual folklore text, giving the opportunity to outline a range of issues related to the reflection of culture in the language as its generation and at the same time means of existence, based on the data of cognitive linguistics and cultural linguistics, national identity and outlook on the world mentality, ethnosmusly and pride in their fathers.

2. Problem Statement

Among scientists, as you know, there are diverse opinions and assessments in the approach to determining the status of ethnoculture in the context of globalization (M. Castells, L. Gudkov, R.A. Khanakhu, Sh.M.-Kh. Arsaliev, Z.A. Kuchukova, M.I. Magomedov and others). Some express open anti-globalization views, others try to give a balanced assessment of a new socio-cultural phenomenon, and still others are actively seeking alternative ways to fit into the new reality.

Problems associated with the state of modern society, especially with “forgotten” youth, suggest an urgent need through reconstruction of the type of ethnic culture, studying the deep structure of national folklore, universality and significance of mythological ideas and rituals to reveal the most important character traits and social positions of North Caucasian peoples who are from deep archaic among themselves in close contact.

The question of the spiritual and practical dominant of national culture is already being raised today by both scientists and public figures who are trying to create conditions for the development of civic identity, to maintain and strengthen the national and cultural integrity of society, while carefully preserving the diversity and uniqueness of each ethnic group unity, thus ensuring the national community of people as an effective means of preventing and preventing chauvinism, racism, hostility, extremism (Arsaliev, 2015).

In our opinion, a general plan for the reconstruction of the holistic concept of the culture of the North Caucasus region is necessary, in which the identified spiritual phenomena shared with other cultures, which constitute the stable core of the ethnos and provide it with identity and vitality, will take their place. Relationships and upbringing should be based on the dialogue of common spiritual phenomena of cultures, because the younger generation of the population of the region, and the country as a whole, has a weak idea of the role that spiritual values play in the development of a real citizen and patriot, that without taking them into account and understanding the individual ceases to correlate himself with the people, loses the sense of belonging to any social group. National features and national characteristics are most clearly

reflected in the ethnical and aesthetic system of the mountaineer, which captured the works of oral folk art of the peoples of the Caucasus.

Thus, the post-perestroika years revealed the ignorance of young people about the peculiarities of the national mentality, ethical and aesthetic norms of mountain life, illogicality in the understanding of multiculturalism and the model of intercultural relations, which allows ethnonational minorities to preserve their identity.

All of the above identified the research problem: to reveal in the works of oral folk art, which captured the archaic national picture of the world, ethnic consciousness, view of the world, mentality, ethno-senses - in a word that is included in the concept of "national person" and contributes to "human entry into humanity".

3. Research Questions

The subject of the research is the folklore and ritual texts that contain the national picture, the ethical and aesthetic system of the highlanders, the ethnosmiths that make up the national identity identified for the upbringing of the youth by the national culture and national culture.

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to identify the forms reflecting the specificity of folklore in the context of the national mentality, symbolism of objects, religious activities, rituals in the language in the aspect of preserving the oldest matrices of national consciousness.

5. Research Methods

It is known that it is possible to study folklore both in the aspect of the art of the word and as an element of traditional culture, because folklore acts like all traditional folk culture, in all the diversity of its forms and ways of expression. This can be explained not only by the desire to comprehend its specifics, the system of plots, genres, etc., but mainly by the fact that it is a reflection of a special picture of the world that has developed in popular consciousness for thousands of years and has not lost its significance in our time; This aspect of folklore is characterized by a semiotic (sign) approach to folk facts, taking into account their extra-textual ties, ritual-magical and social and everyday functions, etc. (Vinogradova, 1989). Linguistics, as is well known, plays a specific role in the integrated study of the spiritual culture of an ethnos: it introduces modern methods of systematization of material and systems analysis of texts, principles of internal and external reconstruction into the general study of national culture. In addition, the study of cultural heritage requires the treatment of folklore as the spiritual traditions of the people, "... and not as with remnants of the past and the "birthmarks" of national isolation, deliverance from which is dictated by the dictates of modern social and cultural development" (Gamzatov, 2010, p. 210).

The system of genres, as is known, is constantly evolving historically, and as a result we have today material that has evolved over the course of centuries of development, not only of a local nature, but also of the development of folklore in the North Caucasus region, which contributed to the formation of a chain of folklore connections, unity, analogies community; identification of folklore processes of a typological

nature. More Gatsak (1972) wrote that “when considering the folklore of historically close peoples, analyzing multinational monuments, it is necessary to distinguish regional typologies from those of a more general order, to take into account the unity of the ancient population, periods of development and symbiosis of folk cultures, diverse contact links” (p. 551).

The commonality of Ossetian folklore is explained by the genetic affinity of the representatives of two dialects of the Ossetian language belonging to the Iranian language family, Iron and Digor, which explains the local absence of ethnolinguistic diversity. But, it should be noted that the Abkhaz-Adyg, Nakh-Dagestan and Turkic languages have coexisted since ancient times in the macro-region and determined the contact folklore relationships. It is considered quite natural that they exerted an ethnocultural influence on the characteristics of folklore, the degree of preservation of the ancient local historical and cultural traditions, on the intensity of foreign ethnic influences, and the centuries-old community that goes back to the ancient all-Caucasian substrate is the result of co-creation, because its own features, its own distinctive features and artistic nuances, the source of which were certain aesthetic ideas, due to the national identity of a lost order (Dalgat, 1962).

According to Putilov (1976), the description of the individual structural elements of the rite in the verbal text is only one that lies on the surface, an obvious, but not exhaustive, plan of meaning, the so-called ritual plan of folklore narration corresponding to the “step” of a particular ritual act.

Along with it, a “mythological” plan of meaning, which is not directly reducible to ritualistic acts, often appears in a hidden form that requires special decoding.

At the stage of a later evolutionary development of ritual folklore, an expansion of the emotional plane occurs, which tends to be more closely connected with the real life basis (Putilov, 1976).

So, the language is fundamental. One cannot study the features of folklore works without knowing the primary element, the fundamental principles from which they are created, on which folklore is created in its communicative function. A comprehensive study of the language of ritual folklore, the authors hope, will make it possible to understand the specifics of folklore in the context of a national mentality. The paper presents linguistic, folklore and ethnographic sources as the basis for a special ritual understanding of space, for the reconstruction of the mythological world view and world view.

6. Findings

An integrated approach to the facts of language in a broad cultural aspect is associated with the understanding of folklore ritual text as a unit of language, which has a special plan of content and expression, with a characteristic use of linguistic signs, and extra-linguistic means of expression, with the indispensable consideration of mythological semantics.

Each national integrity, it is believed, is a meta-code of national ontology, covering and explaining all areas of life of a given society. An individual “grid of mental coordinates” inherent in every nation, predetermined by landscape, geographical, historical and cultural reasons and realities, lies at the heart of the “beloved dissimilarity” of peoples and cultures, and which “... should be cherished, it is our common value. It is necessary to appreciate the fact that it is not me and not we, which means that they know and are able to do what makes up - my unique ability and understanding too ... ” (Gachev, 2008, p. 152). A single core of national culture derived by scientists contributes to the perception and world outlook of both

our own and foreign cultures, teaches us to see the differences in the complement and enrichment of one's worldview with a foreign culture, and to compare the "voices" of these cultures and worlds with the "voice of one humanity".

Genuine interest for us is the reading of ethnocultural terms by scientists (landscape, language, life, dance, feast, etc.) as *texts that embody the national value system, logic, psyche and psychology of the ethnos*.

According to Gachev (2008), every nation on earth has his calling, his idea, his entelechy as God's plan for him. The methodology developed by scientists is applicable to recreating the mentality of any ethnic society, including Ossetians.

The main ontological constant of North Ossetia, lying at the foot of the mountains, is the idea of the *vertical* (sacral symbolism of the mountain), which as the main spatial coordinate carries all the meaning of the load and is displayed in the life, morality and culture of the highlanders.

It is known that the mountain, embodying the connection between the sky and the underground world, as the center and axis of the Universe, is considered by the language of symbols as a container of divine inspiration. Ascending to it, the traveler approaches the Center of the World and, when he reaches the highest point, he encounters the transcendental world that goes beyond the limits of mundane space, thus reaching the "pure land", the limit of ascent, spiritual elevation and purification. The mountain is a place of communication with high spirits, a tree of life and a region of light, a place of high thoughts and states (Andreeva, 2000). Based on the law of correlation between the surrounding world and specific features of mentality, it can be stated that the essence of the Ossetians determines the archetype of the mountains, and the ecosystem is responsible for their mentality and character. One cannot but agree with Kuchukova (2006), who believes that

the mountains set the rhythm, resulting in a unique ontological imbalance, disproportion: excess, extreme congestion of the vertical course when horizontal is inactive, but this is from the point of view of comparative geomansion. In fact, such an elongated model of the world is the world of a mountaineer, in which it fits organically, subordinating to it all levels of its practical and spiritual being. (p. 151)

Inexhaustible spirit of freedom, remembrance for good and evil, loyalty to the traditions of ancestors, sincere, selfless care for the elderly and children, unshakable, evolved over the centuries, the code of man's honor, contempt for the "paper" laws and respect for unwritten, but secured by conscience adat, military valor. This is by no means a complete list of the worldview imperatives of the highlanders imprinted in their folklore. In fact, the Highlanders are united in the basic values of the worldview and mental-psychological features.

It is believed that due to the landscape conditions of the mountain and foothill zones in the historical retrospect, the genetic purity, historical memory and identity of the highlanders are preserved. The concept of mountain as a concept of top was carefully tabooed, which is why they intuitively protected themselves from the alien and destructive worldview of the plain inhabitants.

According to the mythopoetic tradition, the mountain was considered the receptacle of souls, where they were transferred to another form of existence, which was reflected in the spiritual culture and mentality

of the Ossetians, in their relation to another world, the world of their ancestors. The existence of a highlander is vertical in structure, so the cult of ancestors becomes a guarantee of vitality. For Ossetians, it is very important that the deceased be buried in the ancestral cemetery, in the ancestral crypt, although they can live in various places, very far from their birthplace and from the graves of their ancestors. This feature distinguishes them from other Caucasian highlanders, who are more attached and reluctant to leave their homes, their homes. In this, according to Arutyunov (2009), their Alanian nomadic heritage, their mentality of high mobility is manifested.

The habit of high mobility becomes extremely important in observing the cult of ancestors, preserving the memory of them, in understanding the inseparability of the lives of the departed and those of the living, in the understanding of their mutual influence on each other. In this, in the opinion of the venerable scientist,

one should look for a mechanism of high cultural continuity, which allows an ethnos, a society to remain itself, regardless of large territorial movements. Of all the rites in the Ossetian spiritual culture, the transition rites are most important, and among them there are funeral and memorial rites, in which, like in a mirror, the main features of the Ossetian mentality and, accordingly, verbal and behavioral expression of this mentality are focused. (Arutyunov, 2009, p. 7)

In ceremonies belonging to the type of transitional, in which the change of status of a person is ritually fixed, the thinking goes in spatial categories. For example, the Ossetian burial and commemoration rite operates with such concepts as the space of life (*мæнз дунæ* is an illusory, ghostly world) and the space of death, or “eternal life” (*æцæз дунæ* is the real, real world).

In the text of the Nart legends of the Ossetians, the main components of the mythological construction of space are expressed in the ability of the heroes of the epic to move freely in different vertical worlds - from the real world to the “world of shadows” or to the “heavenly world” and vice versa. A similar movement of Narts takes place in almost all ethnocultural versions of the Nartiada.

The designation of space in the epic plot is, in our opinion, the sign nature of reality for the archaic consciousness: for example, in the storyline of the story “The Tree of Narts” we meet with three sisters in the form of golden pigeons, who are the spokesmen of the archaic idea of the vertical world pattern. The sisters take off from the water kingdom (bottom) to the top of the World Tree (the Golden Apple Tree of Narts), marking all the vertical zones of the world, and the absence of a wounded bird - one of the sisters - reveals a weakening of the entire cosmogonic construction and entails the infiltration of Chaos, which can make irreparable changes in the universe. The structure of the world is restored only by the revival of its middle zone: to the hand of Donbettyr's wounded daughter “a woman put a wing and hit it with a felt lash: the girl became seven times more beautiful than she was before”.

But the principle of the vertical, which is present in the Nartiad, is the predestination of the mountain mentality and the national existence of the Highlanders, which, unfortunately, has been poorly studied to date. For example, three Ossetian pies with sacred cheese (*уæлливæхтæ*) vertically simulate mythological space, dividing it into three cosmological spheres (celestial, earthl and underground), they are also associated with three levels of existence: God, the Sun and Earth (Uarziati, 1995). During the mourning

meal there is no middle cake symbolizing the Sun, and the symbols of God and Earth remain. The middle zone is empty: life energy has left it (symbolism of the dead zone). The pies, like the wounded dove from a legend about the dying daughter of the king of the underwater kingdom (mortally wounded dove lies “in the middle” of the house), personify the dying zone (energy) of the world.

The most complete picture of the unity of the three worlds and their identity is reflected in the legend “Exiled in the Land of the Dead”, in which we find the endowment with *spatial* signs of “non-space” (the underworld), which undoubtedly contradicts the modern pragmatic worldview, but quite logical follows from the mythological thinking.

However, the semantics of spatial levels, arising from the texts of the epoch about swords, over time, acquires new meanings. The process of enrichment and the emergence of new meanings of the mythological structure of space is especially intensive in the period from the 12th to the 18th century: during this period its perception acquires a socio-moral and moral-religious coloring. Such a perception of space did not take place in the early cycles of legends and, on the contrary, it became a *distinctive* feature of the Nart epic of the late period. In some legends of this time, a qualitatively new semantics of spatial ideas about the spatial organization of the universe is revealed, and it manifests itself in a peculiar understanding by the Highlanders of the Middle Ages of the opposition “*space of life*” - “*space of death*”.

It can be noted that in the era of mythological consciousness, each of the three levels of the vertical structure of space had *cosmogonic* values (the vertical structure of the World Tree is a means of modeling the space-time cosmology, and the horizontal is a means of organizing ritual as a normal basis of behavior). At the same time, they are neutral with respect to moral and ethical values: the “land of the ancestors” and the “land of people” and the “land of the gods” could have been and were the sphere of activity of both “evil” and “good” gods, people spirits. With the spread of religions - Christianity and Islam - each of the three spheres in the legends about narts acquires moral and evaluative characteristics, and the movement of narts vertically - “*earth - heaven*” or “*earth - hell*” is carried out only if the hero of the legend made feat or fall. Here we should note the *stability of the three-part vertical structure of space* in the Narta epic, and therefore in the artistic and figurative awareness of reality, both by the Ossetians and by the other Highlanders of the North Caucasus region.

Without in any way challenging the concepts of J. Dumesil and V. Abaev about the three-functional system of Nartiada (Abaev, 1990; Doumesiel, 1976), we would like to offer a slightly different interpretation of it. The godless sledges (Uryzm, Khimyts, Batraz, and Soslan) mythologically personify, in our opinion, the “*land of the gods*” - the upper level of the vertical model of the cosmos; Alagata - “*the land of people*” - the average level of the vertical model of space; and only Borat is rich in sheep and cows, which, in the views of the highlanders, has not only economic, but also symbolic and sacral values. After all, only they are able to make the most magnificent commemorations of their ancestors, slaughtering a myriad of bulls and flocks of sheep. The young goby, ram or lamb were the obligatory objects of mythological cults as objects of the sacrifice of *totem* animals. In the mythological layers of consciousness, the *totem* belongs to the “*land of the ancestors*”, i.e. the lower level of space-space. We think that it would be possible to conclude that the Borat clan is not only an estate of farmers, but, more importantly, an image of mythological ancestors, which is identical to the lower level of the vertical model of space - the “*land of ancestors*”.

The spatial code is also present in the division along the vertical axis of the Nart habitat space into three levels: the upper level is assigned to the soldiers and their leaders (Akhsartagkata, Upper Nart), the middle level is assigned to the priests (Alagata, Middle Nart), the lower level is occupied by producers and accumulators of wealth (Borat, Nizhny Nart).

The vertical principle corresponded to both the structure of the mountain dwellings and the Ossetian sanctuaries, the latter being characterized by detachment and spacing.

The ancient dwelling had in the roof of the house the only light-emitting hole of *Erdo*, it served as a channel of communication between man and the Upper World. According to some beliefs, the souls of ancestors came to their homes through these smoke and light holes. The top of the universe, along with this, marked the middle ceiling beam with a superfixed chain attached to it, on which the boiler was hung. The lower level of the world symbolized the stable, where the ceremonial introduction of the woman in labor to the generative force of the Earth took place.

In the village of Zgid Alagirsky district, the village with residential houses is located vertically spatially lower, a little higher - the prayer houses (*цардахътæ*), the main sanctuary of Alarda is high on the rock, the entrance to it is in the opposite direction from the village (Darchieva, 2012). Public prayer forms being and builds a hierarchy of its various spiritual levels. A person in the practice of prayer rises to the divine level, connects with the Almighty and reveals the divine side of his consciousness. For example, when performing the rite of Alarda, the prayer book over the sacrificial animal in a common house flows into the prayer book at the sanctuary, which entails a change in the spatial structure vertically, then returns to the common house.

The code of the Ossetians *æгъдау*, translated as “custom”, “adat”, “norm of behavior” (a phrase *æгъдаумæ гæсгæ* “according to custom, under the law”, *æгъдау кæнын* “respect”; “to show respect”, “to attend”, “pay tribute”; *æгъдау æвæрын* “to establish laws, rules, procedures, customs”; “restore order, discipline”; *æгъдау дæттын* “respect” (Abaev, 1958). For the mountaineers in all situations it is important to follow the rules and etiquette and to rise with all your spirit over life.

According to *æгъдау*, i.e., tradition, vertical subordinate communication is strictly maintained; they establish seniority on the basis of gender, *Лæг хъуамæ лæджы бынаты уа* “a Man needs to be in place men”; *Хорз усæн йæ цæст тæраз у, йæ дзырд – адджын –* “A good wife's eyes are scales, the word is honey”; age (the youngest should be in subjection to the older, *Хистæрæн – хистæры ран, кæстæрæн – кæстæры ран* “Senior – place senior, Junior – place younger”; the older has lot of life experience and practical reason: *Хистæр – зондамонæг, кæстæр – æгъдаухæссæг* “Senior – teacher, mentor, Junior – bearer of tradition, order, discipline”) and **property characteristics** (*belonging to a noble family defines social status, though, does not imply the possession of considerable property*). Success in the vertical projection of society is possible when the relations between individuals and individual groups become subordinated.

In the context of the Ossetian wedding rituals, the ceremonial space is represented by the cultural opposition “upper - masculinity” - “lower - femininity”. These two conceptual areas are opposed to each other on a number of grounds: *male* - horse - top - white - sacred and *female* - cow - bottom - black (red) - impure, respectively. This opposition finds its clear rationale when considering the Ossetian wedding rite subject code, which includes the ritual wedding flag *чындзы тырыса*, the smaller wedding flag *сары зæд*

with the “*up and down*” color symbols of the opposition: white *whiskey* “male” and red *сырх* - “female”. The tree flag of a tree has a sacred meaning “The World Tree” (Abaeva, 2013).

The combination of “top” and “bottom” is embodied in the food code of the rite, including the ritual cup of beer of the highest quality Oluton. Beer Oluton symbolizes the sky, and the bowl - the earth. The proportion of females with *syloimgts hai* in the distribution of meat at the feast is the lower jaw of the head of the sacrificial animal, while the men get *the upper part of the head*.

In the action code of the movement of the girl during the wedding dance are directed down, and the movement of the man - up, and during the dance the man is, as a rule, to the right of the woman.

So, the principle of the vertical is fundamental in the ordinary and sacred space of the highlanders, and in consciousness and mentality they are enriched with vertical rhythm.

7. Conclusion

Thus, the problem of “globalization and ethnoculture” is relevant for minority languages of the Caucasus. The process is ambiguous, includes the gradual erasure and loss of traditional features, features of the national way of life, strengthening the reduction of mythopoetic thinking. The conditions of globalization in the North Caucasus region are identical, which means the search for universal paths, including the preservation of the natural nature, national identity and the health of citizens.

Problems associated with the state of modern society, especially with “forgotten” youth, suggest an urgent need through reconstruction of the type of ethnic culture, studying the deep structure of national folklore, universality and significance of mythological ideas and rituals to reveal the most important character traits and social positions of spiritual culture North Caucasian peoples who are deeply archaic among themselves in close contact.

The subject of the study was folklore and ritual texts, on the basis of which the authors pursued the goal: to identify the forms reflecting the specifics of folklore in the context of the national mentality, symbolism of objects, religious activities, rites in its language in the aspect of preserving the ancient matrices of national consciousness; describe the ethno-senses constituting the national individuality for the upbringing of the youth by the national culture and in the national culture.

The analyzed material confirmed that the works of oral folk art, with their amazing simplicity and beauty of form, together with the primary folklore idea, materialize in the language, undergo a second fixation in literature, philosophy and religious thinking; that the folklore text migrates, and this entails a transformation of the realities of everyday language. Speaking in the role of collective memory, they preserve and transmit to the subsequent generations spiritual experience concluded in images and motifs (knowledge, evaluations, behavioral criteria), contributing both to acquaintance with the language of folklore, rich in many facts representing the results of immanent development, and the formation of ethnic identity transfer of popular wisdom, manifestation of national individuality and views on the world, mentality, ethnosmiths and pride in their fathers.

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