

**SCTCMG 2018**  
**International Scientific Conference “Social and Cultural  
Transformations in the Context of Modern Globalism”**

**SPIRITUAL CULTURE OF ETHNOS IN CONTEXT OF  
GLOBALIZATION: SPECIFIC AND GENERAL ASPECTS**

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***Abstract***

The article considers the spiritual culture of ethnos as a key component of its being, which is a syncretic formation consisting of heterogeneous structural blocks, based on myth and folklore, as well as religious ideas, ideological values, psychological and irrational components, various types of knowledge, worldviews, and beliefs. Cognition, as well as the study of individual structural components of spiritual culture of ethnos makes it possible to reveal its complex, contradictory nature, multi-level content, internal correlations, preserving its relative stability and stable existence. In the course of historical development, the spiritual culture is mastered by ethnos representatives, passed on from generation to generation, sometimes multiplying its achievements and developments. In the process of acculturation and interaction with cultural values of other ethnic groups, the spiritual culture of a separate ethnic group is transformed, acquiring various forms and configurations, although its basic parameters remain the same showing the resistance to external influences, including negative ones. The identification of specific, special and general aspects of ethnos spiritual culture is the most important research and cognitive task, the solution of which is of important theoretical and practical importance, which ensures the application of various methodological approaches; however, the authors have a systematic approach that allows creating an integrated vision of ethnos spiritual culture, as well as understanding of each of its structural component and their interrelationships. The article highlights the importance of achievement of cultural unity, including diverse spiritual and cultural values.

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**Keywords:** Spiritual culture, ethnophor, Islam, national mind, unity, integrity.



## **1. Introduction**

The spiritual culture of ethnos should be understood as aggregated customs, traditions, knowledge, moral convictions, ideological values inherent in a particular ethnos, developed by its representatives in the course of creative activity, as well as interacting with other peoples. The emergence of the spiritual culture of ethnos is mainly associated with creativity, cognitive activity of ethnophor (representatives of ethnic group) aimed not only at mastering sensual and external reality, but also inner spiritual values. In the course of historical development, each ethnos accumulates experience, including the spiritual one, which allows determining the meaning of its being and mindset.

The spiritual culture of ethnos includes various forms of social consciousness represented in the form of myth and religious, literary, historical, philosophical, scientific and other monuments of creative activity. The spiritual culture itself is a complex, controversial, heterogeneous syncretic social phenomenon that has developed in various spatial, temporal, and historical contexts. Each ethnos has specific spiritual values that form the basis of its educational, intellectual and cultural development, which are immanently inherent in them or borrowed in the course of interethnic, intercultural communications. A creative, scientific and liberal intelligentsia is formed on the basis of ethnic and cultural values. The intelligentsia is busy with understanding their own history, culture, mindset, and sometimes it predicts future. The creative scientific developments of intelligentsia are translated and absorbed by ethnos representatives (by ethnophors) in the course of their intellectual and practical activities. The best achievements are stored in the ethnos itself, often becoming the property of humanity.

The formation of spiritual culture of ethnos, its mindset takes place using the capabilities of ethnic language, the creation of mythological, folklore scenes, literature, religion, education, educational system, philosophy, and scientific achievements. Inter-ethnic communications, established specific cognitive practices, give the supra-biological nature of diverse ethnos activities, its world view, and, in general, its entire spiritual culture and mentality.

## **2. Problem Statement**

The spiritual culture of ethnos is a heterogeneous, syncretic, and controversial education, which includes various forms of social consciousness, a set of ideas, knowledge, beliefs, worldviews inherent in a particular ethnos, forming its mentality. It combines regional and global aspects, the knowledge of which can reveal both the general and specific features of ethnos as part of the society that carries out its livelihoods.

## **3. Research Questions**

The spiritual culture of ethnos in modern conditions is experiencing a meaningful influence of globalization, and deep-seated traditional spiritual and cultural values are subjected to revision, if not to say, that they are undermined by liberal attitudes and principles based on individualistic human rights, the dominance of personal interests, sometimes self-serving and often elevated over religious, ethnic, public, and state values. Fundamental values – equality, free will, irresponsible actions and deeds – suppress the ethnocultural values considered by modern Western political class as a brake on the way to individual and

social progress. Awareness and knowledge of these processes overcome the current crisis processes in the world and find adequate ways to be an ethnos.

Europe is experiencing a crisis of spiritual values, and the peoples inhabiting it depart from the values of Christianity, its high morality, which leads to the decline of traditional humanism. Recording this situation, Oswald Spengler wrote a substantial book entitled "The Decline of Europe" (Spengler, 2009), revealing the dehumanization of European culture, the increasing dominance of technicalism, the transformation of culture into civilization, bearing infertility and ossification. In the course of this, personal, individually selfish, predatory interests are elevated over social, group, ethnic, religious, separating people and atomizing ethnicity.

The ideas of O. Spengler (Fukayama, 2005) are opposed to philosophical views of American futurologist Francis Fukuyama, which uplift the ideal of liberal democracy, asserting that the defeat of rival ideologies – hereditary monarchy, fascism, and communism – resulted in the end of human history. However, the spiritual crisis of the peoples of Europe, the triumph of liberal democracy in the west does not mean the end of history. There is not always a rejection of traditions, religious, ethnic, and social values on the basis of which the peoples of the world, their cultures and mindset have been developed and are still developing. The world is not on the side of universal recognition only of liberal values, and it is not inclined to believe that the American way of life, the projects advanced by the USA are the most perfect and capable of changing the world for the better, making it more humane and perfect. The notorious "Arab Spring" provoked by the West in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Yemen, Bahrain, Morocco is considered a protest of the peoples of these countries against their own oppressors and tyrants. However, unexpectedly, such a situation in the Middle East is being replaced by the post-modernist project – "Caliphate", which is the Islamic state "sucking in" the protest youth from the Muslim world and Europe. There appears a simulacrum state, a kind of monster, demonstrating the inconceivable cruelty of modern civilized world. And all this is justified by extremists and terrorists, hiding behind the slogans of Islam, in pursuit of the goal, which is the development of the world's caliphate. This crime-odious policy is very far from the true essence of Islam, and it certainly represents danger to the West, as well as to Islamic population.

The above mentioned processes do not confirm the end of history in the sense of F. Fukayama; it is still not completed, because it has potential relapses that can lead to conflicts of both local and global nature. The history of mankind continues and it is unlikely to end in our age. The end of a history in an American way means the destruction of various ethnic states with their national cultures, spiritual values, with the dominance of the values of liberalism, spiritual, cultural pluralism, and personal individualism. Rising above the group, ethnic, and religious values they deprive a person, the ethnophore of soil, homeland, and God. Such a way of social and cultural development is not acceptable for billions of people belonging to different ethnic groups and spiritual practices.

The resistance of ethnic cultures is obvious. The process of globalization is far from always neutral, it is expansive, aggressive, and it has a destructive effect on the traditional social and cultural values developed during a long historical development of peoples. The destructive power has a mass culture that corrodes ethno-cultural achievements, including spiritual ones. The most important factor that counteracts globalism is the ethnic culture with its spiritual foundation, which has considerable potential for resistance. A.N. Chumakov notes that the culture has a function of resistance to globalism (Chumakov, 2006). Such

resistance potential is inherent in the cultural values of the peoples of the Caucasus, whom Yu. A. Zhdanov called the "life-giving source", the solar plexus of Eurasia (Zhdanov, 1999). Today, the Caucasians are trying to determine their spiritual and intellectual, as well as social and cultural vector of development through interaction, cooperation with Russia and the world in general, while maintaining their religious and cultural values. Is it possible to preserve the integrity, unity of ethnos, society, the Caucasus, the whole system of human society in modern conditions, when a radical change in the meta-or macro-narrative of modernity takes place. This refers to the fact that, as French postmodernist Jean-Francois Lyotard claims: we have lost faith in such narratives of modern times as the dialectics of spirit, hermeneutics of meaning, liberation of humanity, social justice, etc. By the opinion of postmodernists, striving for integrity and unity leads to Auschwitz, fascism, totalitarianism. In this regard, J.F. Lyotard claimed that "in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, we were fed up with terror. We paid dearly for nostalgia for the whole and single, for reconciliation of conceptual and sensual, for transparent and communicative experience" (Lyotard, 1994). Postmodernists oppose universal cognition, universal dialectics in its Hegelian interpretation; they are also against social experiments on the transformation of society, creation of totalitarian systems organized by fascism and communism. It is hard to oppose this idea; however, what do postmodernists offer in return: individualism, buying and selling, ruining of family and ethnic ties and traditions, a confused person in the flat world of large policies and super-and hypermarkets, experiencing loneliness? One could also add possibilities of biotechnology, exacerbating this crisis, which can radically change the essence of a person, no matter what racial, anthropological and ethnic appearance he/she has acquired.

The German philosopher Walter Schubert expresses an interesting position comparing Western civilization and Russia: Modern Europe is a form without life. And Russia is life without form. In the first case, the soul left the form, leaving only the shell. In the second, the life has blown up the former narrow forms, but has not yet acquired a new one (Shubart, 2003). The described situation is a clear evidence of gap existence between the West and the East, which requires its overcoming; the need for West-Eastern reconciliation, to be more specific, synthesis is required. How to achieve this? Judging by the opinion of V. Shubart, if a European wants to return to the eternal goals of mankind, then he/she should recognize the Russian-Eastern assessment of the world (Shubart, 2003).

Having clearly shaped worldview of European peoples and Russians, he asserts that Englishman views the world as a factory, Frenchman as a salon, German as a barracks, Russian as a temple. Englishman is eager for booty, Frenchman – for glory, German – for authorities, Russian – for victims. In his opinion, Englishman expects benefit from the neighbor, Frenchman strives to arouse sympathy in him, German wants to make orders, and only Russian want nothing. Russian does not turn your neighbor into a weapon. This is the essence of the Russian idea of fraternity. In his opinion, this is the gospel of the future, a great moral force against the Latin ideas of violence.

The intelligentsia of Russian peoples, including the Caucasian ones, is faced with the extremely important problems such as knowing their present and future internal relationships, as well as the outside world. In order to adequately exist in the conditions of globalization, while preserving and protecting traditional ethnic and cultural spiritual values, one needs new ideas, developments and concepts. It is also obvious that at the same time it is important to accumulate what is valuable in the spiritual and cultural development of the peoples of Russia, the Caucasian ethnic groups. Among the analysts and researchers

studying Caucasus there are the following ones: Yu. A. Zhdanov, R. G. Abdulatipov, O. N. Domenia, G. V. Drach, M. I. Bilalov, Kh. G. Thagapsoev, V. V. Chernous, R. D. Khunagov, A. Yu. Shadzhe, S. A. Lyausheva, and others.

According to M.I. Bilalov, relying on the peculiarities of world-famous ethnic groups, it is necessary to reveal general specifics of North Caucasian national mindset, analyzing the scientific mind and thinking of Jews, national mind of Greeks and British, the mystery of Slavic soul, the national mind of Dagestanis.

Describing the mental features of the Russian people, he rightly declares that "Russians, being also Europeans, have very little in common with the latter in their cognitive culture, and disagree on the main point, i.e. they are not rationalists. Russian spirituality is more likely to be emotional, lyrical than scientific" (Bilalov, 2008; Bilalov, 2010). It is important to understand and comprehend that the peoples of the North Caucasus are also not strict rationalists who adhere to cold math; although in their practice and rational activity they are still focused on the European values. They also preserved the spirituality, unselfishness, openness, devotion to traditions, friendship, and traditional relationship between sexes, sacred attitude to the family, race, and religion. These spiritual qualities of the Caucasian-traditionalist were recently demonstrated in the United States by Habib Nurmagomedov during his fight for the UFC championship belt against American Conor McGraegor. The latter behaved disgustingly, allowing obscene remarks, insulting the father, the people, and the religion of his opponent. However, the victory of Habib is not only a physical feat, but also a spiritual one, aimed at protecting the traditional ethnic values of Dagestanis, Caucasians. This is a demonstration of readiness to defend the honor and dignity of their family and homeland.

Certainly, such behavior is the result of adherence and development of spiritual and religious traditions that are preserved among many peoples of Russia, including Islamic people, who adhere to Sufi values and who respect various ethnic groups, cultures and spiritual practices. The processes associated with Islamic, Sufi values manifested in some peoples of the North Caucasus, as well as the Muslim peoples of the Volga region, are reflected in a number of publications by regional authors (Akaev & Soltamuradov, 2016).

The most important form of reflection of global processes in the regional dimension is the peculiarities of penetration and manifestation of terrorism in the North Caucasus, which has a religious, Islamic coloring (Akaev, Keligov, & Nanaeva, 2017), markedly destroying the customs, traditions, moral, mental foundations for many centuries preserving the spiritual and cultural unity of the peoples of the region. Thus, the most important threat to traditional spiritual ethnic values in modern conditions is extremist and terrorist manifestations, to some extent penetrating the ethnic cultures. Terrorism in all its forms and manifestations is an inhuman ideology and a practice of violence, as well as an extremely immoral phenomenon; the embodiment of an "absolute evil".

#### **4. Purpose of the Study**

The spiritual culture of ethnos is a heterogeneous and controversial education, which includes various forms of social consciousness, a set of ideas, knowledge, beliefs, worldviews inherent in a particular ethnos, formed during its historical development, creative development of the world and communications

with other ethnic groups. It combines regional and global aspects, the knowledge of which makes it possible to identify its common and specific features, as well as edges.

## **5. Research Methods**

The knowledge of the spiritual culture of ethnos is based on theoretical approaches associated with evolutionism, diffusionism, functionalism, structuralism, cultural relativism, etc. The formation of the spiritual culture of ethnos is associated with its gradual development, acquisition of new quantitative components that emphasize their characteristics and interrelation. Diffusionism as a method of knowledge that allows revealing the spatial characteristics of spiritual culture, borrowing other cultural components. The functional method makes it possible to study and find out the functions of each component of ethnos spiritual culture of. Of course, these methodological tools allow for the knowledge of different edges of ethnic culture, in general, and its spiritual component, in particular. Each of these methodological approaches makes it possible to reproduce and understand the individual aspects of the structural components of ethnic culture, which limits the holistic understanding of spiritual being of ethnic group and its dynamics. Therefore, it is preferred to use an integrated, systematic approach as far as learning of spiritual culture of ethnos is concerned.

## **6. Findings**

The spiritual culture of many traditional nations, including Dagestanis, Chechens, Ingushes, Ossetians, Kabardians, Balkarians, Karachays, Adygs, and other peoples of the North Caucasus is a syncretic formation developed on the basis of pagan, Christian, Islamic values interspersed with integrated rational components. In general, in their spiritual cultures there are features of irrationalism, mysticism, and emotional expression, as well as practical wisdom and calculation, suggesting mental tension, synthesis and conclusions.

Strong clans that strengthen the spiritual community, such as the peoples of the North-Eastern Caucasus, are Islam in its Sufi form, which strengthen their customs and traditions. Carefully studying the syncretic nature of the spiritual culture of Russian ethnic groups, clearly establishing external influences, and also relying on their internal spiritual and cultural values, it is crucial to develop a common theoretical model of their spiritual and cultural development taking into account regional characteristics in the context of a globalizing world, as well as modernizing Russia. It is very important to clearly identify the common spiritual and cultural parameters, taking into account in detail the ethnic and cultural diversity of the peoples of the North Caucasus and Russia. Meanwhile, the implementation of this model will make it possible to achieve a lasting spiritual and cultural unity, as well as deepen sociocultural integration processes in the country.

## **7. Conclusion**

The spiritual culture study of individual nations, the identification of its basic structural components related to mentality, customs and traditions, as well as various forms of social consciousness and knowledge that shape this phenomenon is an important theoretical and methodological problem solved by applying an integrated and systematic approach that allows considering it in conjunction with its structural components,

dynamics, in the context of historical and cultural processes. Spiritual culture is a complex and contradictory phenomenon, many of the structural units of which are not homogeneous for they combine religious and secular, rational and irrational, social and individual, authoritarian and democratic, especially patriotic and general international, etc. components.

For many peoples of the North Caucasus, for example, Dagestanis, Chechens, Ingushes, Ossetians, Kabardians, Balkarians, Karachais, Adygs, and others the spiritual culture is syncretistic because it historically was formed on the basis of pagan, Christian, Islamic values interspersed with secular and rational components. In the spiritual cultures of these peoples, the features of irrationalism and mysticism are clearly visible. The emotional expression is manifested; however, it does not mean that they are devoid of practical wisdom and calculation. The customs and traditions of the past are deeply rooted in the spiritual culture of these peoples, which is manifested in their behavioral attitudes, various ritual practices, and world outlook.

Due to the fact that a significant part of the peoples of the North Caucasus profess Islam, its values strengthen their spiritual unity, acting as an integrating principle. For the peoples of the North-Eastern Caucasus (Dagestanis, Chechens, Ingushes), Islam in its Sufi form acts as an integrator, which allows preserving the customs and traditions of ethnic groups, not allowing them to disappear. In the North-West Caucasus populated with such ethnic groups as Ossetians, Balkarians, Kabardians, Circassians, Karachay, Adygs their spiritual cultures are firmly based on mixed pagan, Christian, Islamic components, and Islam itself has acquired the form of the so-called "national Islam".

The study of the syncretic nature of spiritual culture of ethnic groups allows us to clearly establish the specific nature of their internal components, reflecting the characteristics of their interaction, as well as common positions. The external global influences have a significant impact on the spiritual culture of ethnos, often changing its structure. In this regard, the need to create a unified theoretical model of spiritual and cultural development of ethnic groups, taking into account regional characteristics, general trends of mutual influence of cultures, their spiritual and material development, is absolutely foregrounded. The processes of globalization have a powerful impact on Russia, which is forced to modernize its economy, social relations, seeking scientific and technological development. All this influences inter-ethnic and intercultural relations.

However, it does not mean that the spiritual practices of the cultures of the peoples of Russia will undergo some radical changes. Naturally, this will not happen due to conservative nature of cultural values inherent in the traditional ethnic groups. Nevertheless, they have to adapt to the realities, as well as global and modernization processes. For an ethnos it is important to establish what needs to be preserved and what has to be got rid of; such a selection, as a rule, in the practice of cultural development is carried out by national intelligentsia, the government with the support of ethnos.

It seems that in this regard, an analytical work should be carried out to highlight general parameters of the spiritual culture of ethnic group, revise the structural components, while not ignoring the value diversity of spiritual practices of the Russian ethnic groups, including the North Caucasian ones. Solving such a problem by analyzing, specifying, and generalizing will allow the theoretical and practical implementation of creating a model of a strong spiritual and cultural unity of ethnic groups. It will allow

deepening the integration processes in Russia, contributing to modern development of diverse ethnic groups with their cultural peculiarities.

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