

**ISCKMC 2020****International Scientific Congress «KNOWLEDGE, MAN AND CIVILIZATION»****MATERIAL AND SPIRITUAL ASPECTS OF HISTORICAL AND  
CULTURAL HERITAGE OF KALMYK PEOPLE**

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**Abstract**

Currently, the historical and cultural heritage of the peoples of Russia should be rethought in terms of its place in society. New approaches to its preservation are required. It is important to study it in new geopolitical conditions. The relevance of the study is due to modern trends in understanding the historical and cultural heritage as knowledge translation, historical memory preservation, the basis of national identification in the modern globalization process, capital that can be used to stabilize the situation in the region. In recent years, there has been a significant increase in the number of studies on nomadism using the civilizational approach based on the specifics of the nomadic system determined by the way nomads explored the world around them. The problems that are still on the agenda in the study of nomadic societies and cultures, different conceptual approaches indicate the need for further research. Of particular interest is the rich and diverse historical and cultural (archaeological, artifact, folklore, manuscript) heritage of the Kalmyks, nomadic people who voluntarily became part of Russia and have lived for more than 400 years in its southern part. To solve the problem and develop theoretical approaches, it is necessary to study individual aspects, the current state, and the demand for the expected scientific and practical results. It is necessary to create prerequisites for the formation of new methods and development of existing approaches in this area.

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*Keywords:* Historical and cultural heritage of the Kalmyks, historical memory, spiritual culture, material heritage



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## 1. Introduction

The processes of globalization cause colossal damage to the historical values of each community, forcibly unifying the legal, national, cultural space of peoples. One of the ethnic groups inhabiting Russia are the Kalmyks-Oirats, immigrants from the Central Asian region, who migrated in the 17th century and found a new home here. The nomadic people brought unique, unrepeatably distinctive culture, being the only Asians and representatives of Buddhism in Europe. In modern social conditions, the issues of ethnic self-identification are becoming increasingly important. Appeal to the national cultural heritage and familiarization with its values and ideals allow a person to identify himself in modern society. In this regard, it is necessary to study the phenomenon of historical and cultural heritage of Kalmyk nomads in the socio-cultural space of modern Russia. The study showed that the current crisis state of the Kalmyk ethnos is caused by cultural losses, the loss of language and culture. It goes back to the 19th-20th centuries. An important role belongs to the process of acculturation, which necessitated the transition of Kalmyk nomads from a nomadic to a sedentary lifestyle and entailed fundamental changes in the social and economic structures of society, which led to the disappearance of many aspects of the traditional nomadic lifestyle. The Soviet period was marked by the destruction of traditional religious institutions. Irreplaceable damage to cultural identity, as well as to the gene pool of Kalmyks was caused during the illegal exile of Kalmyks in 1943–1957. The restoration of the Kalmyk Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic and the return of the Kalmyk people to their homeland were marked by the rise of their national consciousness. However, in the late 1980s, the educational and cultural priorities of socialism turned out to be disastrous for the languages and cultures of small peoples, including Kalmyks (Badmaev & Kichikova, 2008).

The study of the historical and cultural heritage of the peoples of Russia, including the Kalmyks, which has accumulated the spiritual experience of the ethnic groups, has a great cognitive and axiological value. On the territory of Kalmykia, there are 341 historical and cultural monuments, including 54 federal objects. Intensive economic activities, unfavorable environmental conditions have created risks of loss of many civilizational features inherent in the culture of the peoples, a threat to the preservation of monuments of historical and cultural heritage.

## 2. Problem Statement

The process of social development is always based on the age-old cultural traditions of the people, the spiritual heritage of the past. Klyuchevsky (1987) said that the achievements of civilization were created "by the joint or successive efforts of all cultural peoples", one should study the participation of each "individual people in the common cultural work of mankind". Various aspects and issues of the history and culture of nomadic pastoralist societies, interpretation and definition of the main characteristics of the stage-evolutionary and civilizational development of nomadism, historical and cultural heritage have been comprehensively studied by domestic and foreign researchers. The modern stage is associated with rethinking and changing scientific paradigms, the development and formation of new approaches. The history of the study of nomadic societies is described by Kradin (2015, 2016), Trepavlov (2015) and other researchers. Some controversial aspects of the history of the nomadic peoples

of Central Asia are described by Bazarov (2015), Danilov (2013, 2014), Dashibalov (2005), Dugarov (2011), Zoriktuev (2016, 2017), Klyashtorny (2012a, 2012b), Kradin and Skrynnikova (2006), Dyakieva (2000), Bicheev (2010), Ochirova (2010), and Seleeva (2013).

The theoretical aspects of historical and cultural heritage have been studied by foreign and Russian researchers: Baller (1987), Bell and Patterson (2009), Zamyatin (2010), Kalay et al. (2007), Kasten (2002), Klimov (2011), Kuryanova (2011), Cameron and Kenderdine (2007), Navrud and Ready (2002), Smith (2007), Hoffman (2006), etc.

A review of the historiography indicates the existence of regional theoretical and practical approaches to the study of historical and cultural heritage of nomadic cultures.

In modern domestic nomadic studies, the “theory of nomadic civilizations” is being developed, the subject area determines a wide range of problems of historical and cultural processes in nomadic societies. Nowadays, in the Russian oriental historiography, there is a methodological polarization of views on the nature of nomadic societies, the absence of a holistic picture of the historical development of nomads. This issue is interdisciplinary and requires studies on historical-ethnographic, archaeological, socio-economic, and environmental aspects, the use of anthropological, archaeological, textological, economic, ecological and other approaches (the chiefdom theory, the theory of cycles and external adaptation, etc.).

### **3. Research Questions**

It is necessary to substantiate the historical and cultural (tangible and intangible) heritage of modern Kalmyks. The historical and cultural heritage is a multilayer formation, reflecting the totality of historical, cultural, geographical, socio-political and axiological aspects. It has many temporary layers, which reflect the material and spiritual culture of ethnic groups in different periods. The study of the regional features of the Buddhist heritage of the Kalmyks is an important point in the analysis of general historical and cultural problems in terms of the role and place of Buddhism in the system of world civilization. The base layer for building a comprehensive model for analyzing the historical and cultural heritage is archaeological and architectural monuments, including the remains of buildings, the ruins of ancient cities, settlements, parking lots; religious buildings (temples, monasteries, stupas).

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

The purpose of this study is to formulate the problem and develop comprehensive to identify the key dominants of historical and cultural heritage of the Kalmyks. The article aims to study the process of preserving and using the monuments of history and culture of the Republic of Kalmykia, features and place of the historical and cultural heritage of the Kalmyk ethnic group in the multinational and poly-confessional country.

### **5. Research Methods**

From a methodological perspective, this study is an experience of building a comprehensive vision of the problem. An interdisciplinary, integrated approach makes it possible to synthesize all relevant

aspects of the study of historical and cultural heritage of the Kalmyks and to carry out a holistic research. The principle of historicism allows us to consider the phenomena in their organic relationship. The principle of objectivity is applied in assessing facts, events, phenomena and based on a comprehensive analysis of sources. It makes it possible to assess the historical experience of preservation of cultural heritage of the Kalmyk people as part of the events and processes of Russian history. The combination of these methods makes it possible to solve the tasks set in the article.

## 6. Findings

The solution of regional and ethnic problems and cultural identification are impossible without studies on language, history, religion, folklore and literary monuments, revealing the spiritual and moral experience of interethnic interactions. The modern culture of Kalmykia is an integral part of the cultural space of Russia. The Kalmyk culture is of interest as a variant of the nomadic Eurasian culture. Kalmykia is the only region in Europe whose people profess Buddhism. Improved processes of spiritual life depend on the level of organization, the legal basis for the formation, preservation, and development of culture. The study showed that the current crisis state of the Kalmyk society is caused by many cultural losses, first of all, the loss of the native language rooted in the 19<sup>th</sup>–20<sup>th</sup> centuries. An important role belonged to the process of acculturation, which necessitated the transition of Kalmyk nomads from a nomadic to a sedentary lifestyle and entailed fundamental changes in the social and economic structures of society, which led to the disappearance of many aspects of the traditional nomadic lifestyle. The industrialization was marked by anti-religious policies that destroyed the traditional religious institutions of the Kalmyks. The greatest damage to the cultural identity of the Kalmyks was caused by the deportation of the Kalmyk people in 1943–1957. The subsequent rehabilitation and return of the people, the restoration of the Kalmyk ASSR were marked by the rise of national self-awareness. Meanwhile, the study showed that since the 1980s, during the period of developed socialism, educational and cultural priorities in national policy turned out to be disastrous for the languages and cultures of small peoples, including the Kalmyks.

Attempts of national revival have marked the post-Soviet period since in the early 1990s, there was a tendency to refer to language and folk culture. National classes, schools, centers of folk art were created, festivals of ethnic cultures were held, national holidays (Tsagan Sar, Zul), sports competitions in traditional sports, wrestling, horse racing, "Dzhangariada", etc. were widely celebrated. This period contributed to the active revival of Buddhism (traditions, medicine, astrology, ceremonies, rituals and practices). Buddhist institutions that have close ties with foreign Buddhist centers were established. They contributed to the development of Buddhism in the leading scientific oriental and Mongolian centers. Ethnic culture is studied by the middle and young generation of Kalmyks. They wear national clothes, perform Kalmyk dances, sing Kalmyk songs, etc. Traditional family ties continue to play an important role in Kalmyk society: genealogies, ancestral rituals, ceremonies and rituals associated with life cycles (births, weddings, etc.), folk beliefs, national and religious holidays.

At the same time, one of the acute problems of the Kalmyk ethnic group is the loss of continuity in the transmission of traditional culture and its misunderstanding, underestimation, and often rejection and loss, which is facilitated by the lack of knowledge of the native language. This refers to traditional Kalmyk folklore. Without living reproduction, oral folk art ceases to be a carrier of meanings, values,

attitudes, becoming only a rudiment of culture. The fabulous and epic storytelling tradition, the tradition of signing lingering songs "ut dun" and lingering hymn chants "chastr dun" have been lost. Folk games and riddles, legends, oral traditions, beliefs are losing their educational ethnopedagogical value. Objects of material culture are endangered. The scale of destruction of archaeological monuments is great. Most of them are exposed to anthropogenic pressures associated with construction of houses, roads, oil pipelines; predatory excavations and private construction.

It was believed that the Kalmyks as a nomadic people did not have architectural structures. Meanwhile, the ancestors of the Kalmyks – the Oirats – were acquainted with architectural structures. The development of architecture was largely associated with the spread of Buddhism. In order to attract the flock, religion used all possible means, including art. The study of field materials, literary, archival data and other sources proved the presence of various types of architectural monuments in the uluses (regions) of Kalmykia. According to the archival materials of the 1840s, there were four wooden temple buildings in Kalmykia. In the 1960s, Malakharakhusov khurul was built. In Erketenovskiy ulus in 1853–1854 the construction of the Ikibagutov Khurula temple was completed. The same temples were erected in many uluses. The Dundu-Khurul temple of the Maloderbetov ulus was characterized by rich decorative design features. There were the following motives of artistic painting: various geometric and stylized plant patterns, images of living and mythical creatures (dragons, animals and birds). The cornices of the buildings were decorated with wood carvings, stone. The premises were high. Many Buddhist temples and other religious buildings did not differ much from the architecture of Russian wooden peasant houses. Along with Kalmyk craftsmen, Russian craftsmen also participated in the construction process. An analysis shows that Kalmyk architecture developed as a combination of Tibetan-Mongolian, Russian church and Russian peasant styles of architecture. The design of the outer part of the roof in the form of tiers reflects the influence of Tibeto-Mongolian architecture, and the domes towering over the roof were built in the traditions of Russian Orthodox churches. However, all these historical and cultural values were lost during the Soviet period.

The identification and preservation of cultural heritage sites requires legal registrations. It is necessary to expand the lists of protected historical and cultural monuments, as well as to develop a program for the protection of historical and cultural heritage. The program should be implemented at the federal level with the involvement of public funds and public institutions. Local monuments should become the subject of public attention, manifestations of a wide variety of civic initiatives to foster historical consciousness

Scientists of Kalmykia aim to preserve and popularize the historical and cultural heritage of the Kalmyk people. Complex scientific folklore, ethnographic, archaeological expeditions with the involvement of specialists from various Russian and foreign research centers are organized. The series "Treasures of Ancestors" was founded. It acquaints readers with the folklore repertoire of the best storytellers and experts, folklorists created the fundamental work "Code of Kalmyk Folklore". In line with modern trends, the digitization of archival materials is being carried out, a data bank on the texts of oral poetry of the Kalmyk people is being created. For many decades, scientists from the Kalmyk Scientific Center of the Russian Academy of Sciences and Kalmyk State University have been studying the epic "Dzhangar". "Dzhangar" is a subject studied by a number of research institutions in Russia, near

and far abroad. Scientists from the PRC and Mongolia are collecting materials on the Jangar epic. However, despite the measures taken to preserve, study and popularize the Kalmyk heroic epic "Dzhangar", in the context of globalization, the unique oral storytelling tradition is on the verge of extinction.

The authors came to the conclusion that in order to preserve and develop the unique phenomena of oral and poetic art, to protect it from the negative trends of world globalization, it is necessary to coordinate joint actions with the PRC and Mongolia to include the heroic epic "Dzhangar" in the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage List. In addition, there is an obvious need to create a fund – a comprehensive database on endangered materials of traditional cultural heritage, and to monitoring cultural changes in dynamics. It is important to create specialized databases by creating infrastructure (introduction of information technology), digitizing tape recordings and archival materials.

The avenue for further research is the use of practical results for scientific support of specific socio-economic problems, especially in the educational sphere.

Due to the natural and ecological conditions, the traditional nomadic pastoralism of the indigenous population and the anthropogenic impact, the territory of the republic differs from the neighboring regions by a large saturation of archaeological monuments preserved in their original form – necropolises of the ancient population – steppe mounds. The number of archeological monuments is tens of thousands of mounds, more than 40 settlements or sites (traces of the ancient population) dating from the Stone Age to the Middle Ages. The study revealed a low level of preservation of some of cultural heritage objects. In a changing world, historical and cultural heritage is an important economic factor, a key element of the tourism industry, preserving the historical memory and historical and cultural landscape of the region.

## 7. Conclusion

The radical changes in the post-Soviet society affect the development of culture of Kalmykia. Ideas about cultural heritage are radically changing; they occupy one of the central places in the socio-economic structure of Russia. The value characteristics of the historical and cultural heritage have been revised and changed. They are a prominent segment of the global tourism industry, while its role as an economic factor is growing.

Modern Kalmykia occupies an important geopolitical position, being a connecting link between two neighboring regions, which have striking differences in the variety of natural and geographical conditions and the multi-ethnic composition of the population (the North Caucasus and the Lower Volga region). Migration streams of the past centuries have created unique cultural monuments. The legacy of such historical and cultural epochs as "Khazar Kaganate", "Great Silk Road", "Great Migration of Nations", "Golden Horde" and others have been preserved in museums and folk art. The fundamental nature of the problematics is due to the degree of similarity of historical and cultural heritage of the national regions of Russia, associated with transformation, modernization and adaptation to the new Russian sociocultural realities. One of the promising directions is an appeal to complex of historical and cultural heritage, development of a social policy aimed at ensuring sustainable development of territories. Having a clear historical and geographical localization, cultural heritage creates the basis for local ideology and territorial identity, providing resources for the implementation of cultural and educational

programs, formation of brands, development of tourism and related sectors of the economy. Kalmykia has rich historical and cultural heritage. It should become one of the main resources for the socio-economic development of the region.

Historical and cultural heritage is a complex sociocultural system that interacts with the environment and time and carries certain information that changes in time and space. It is the heritage that underlies the information codes that ensure the "production", accumulation and transmission of information in human civilization. In order to preserve and develop the unique phenomena of oral and poetic creativity, to protect it from the negative tendencies of world globalization, it is necessary to solve the issue of recognizing "Dzhangar" as the cultural heritage of Russia, coordinate joint actions with the PRC and Mongolia to include the heroic epic "Dzhangar" in the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage List. There is also a need to create a comprehensive database on endangered materials of traditional cultural heritage, as well as to monitor cultural changes. The materials on a special website can be used as a source of information for educational, research and promotional purposes.

Due to the natural and ecological conditions, the traditional nomadic pastoralism of the indigenous population and the anthropogenic impact, the territory of the republic differs from the neighboring regions by a large saturation of archaeological monuments preserved in their original form – necropolises of the ancient population – steppe mounds. The number of archaeological sites is tens of thousands of mounds, more than 40 settlements (traces of the ancient population) dating from the Stone Age to the Middle Ages. Historical and cultural heritage is an important economic factor, a key element of the tourism industry, preserving the historical memory and historical and cultural landscape of the region. The study revealed the need to organize rescue archaeological excavations, which make it possible to explore the world of ancient nomads, to understand their way of life, to find out their preferences and ideas. Practical results can be used for scientific solution of specific socio-economic problems. The model of a comprehensive study of the historical and cultural heritage can be accompanied by recommendations for the implementation of this model in the Republic of Kalmykia and translation of the experience to other regions of Russia.

Thus, a system of interrelationships between culture, heritage and information is created. It makes it possible to reproduce the achievements of culture for new generations. Therefore, it is necessary to develop appropriate strategies and various approaches that would preserve the richness of the national culture and pass it on to future generations.

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