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**ETHNIC CULTURE AND RELIGION: THE RELATIONSHIP OF
GENERAL AND SPECIFIC ASPECTS**

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Abstract

The publication comprehends the relationship between the concepts of "ethnic culture" and "religion." The definitions of the concepts "ethnic culture" and "religion" make it possible to identify the general and special parameters that characterize them. Ethnic culture is viewed as the results of centuries-old creative activity of representatives of an ethnic group. In general, the ethnos is characterized by the general characteristics of communication between people; they are identified, consolidated, created, orientation towards finding the best prospects for their socio-cultural development. Religion occupies an important place in ethnic culture. Religion correlates with ethnic culture, interacts with it, shapes it, to a certain extent giving it a specific and even integrative character. Ethnic culture correlates with traditional, national, and mass forms of culture, which have specific characteristics. These cultural phenomena are quite close. Moreover, they have a common basis associated with the production of material and spiritual parameters of society's cultural development. By comparing ethnic culture with other forms of culture, it is possible to highlight common and particular aspects. The study makes it possible to substantiate the proposition that religion is an integral part of ethnic culture, which forms a fantastic perception of the world in an ethnos but increases its spiritual level. Religion often outgrows the scope of ethnic culture. Religion spreads among different peoples, ceasing to be a part of one separate ethnic group's culture, but becoming a factor in the sacralization of their cultural characteristics.

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Keywords: Culture, ethnic culture, national culture, North Caucasus, Sufism, Wahhabism



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1. Introduction

The formation of ethnic culture took place in the course of a long historical development, implementing the multifaceted activities of representatives of an ethnic group (ethnofor). Representatives of ethnic groups have always been aimed at creating material and spiritual values necessary for their existence, development within ethnic communication, and consolidation. These processes are always constructive in nature, during which ethnophores interact, communicate with each other based on ethnic language, traditions, mental characteristics, worldview. Ethnicity is expanding its field of activity. Ethnicity also interacts with other peoples, bearers of other cultural values (Eliade & Culiano, 2014).

Ethnic culture is necessary for representatives of an ethnic group to search for a better life, to adapt to local-regional socio-economic processes. Culture, mental characteristics at an early stage of development of an ethnos divide people into "us" and "strangers." This process forms specific forms of cultural identity among the representatives of the ethnic group. In ethnic culture, the difference between "friends" and "aliens" is carried out in external, anthropological appearance and language, clothing, everyday habits, food, various kinds of rituals, behavioral attitudes, housing, sculpture, and other human-made artifacts. Ethnic culture includes various structural parameters: traditions, ceremonies performed during holidays, weddings, funerals, industrial activities. Folk dances, music, songs, legends, traditions, myths occupy an important place in the structure of ethnic culture. These components are different for different peoples. For example, the mythical legend "The Poem of Gilgamesh" is folklore and the ancient Sumerians' cultural artifact. The myth of Prometheus, a hero who came to the aid of people, was laid down by the ancient Greeks. In the North Caucasus peoples' folklore, a key place is occupied by the "Nart epic," which is used by many peoples of the North Caucasus, for example, Chechens Abkhazians Adygs, Ossetians, Balkars, Karachais, and Svans. These are legends about the adventures and exploits of the Narts, who perform heroic deeds and robberies. The origin of the myth among the Paleo-Caucasians in ancient times is described by Dzhamirzaev (2011).

The most voluminous myth among the peoples of the world is the Kyrgyz epic "Manas." The myths describe the exploits of folk heroes aimed at uniting a scattered ethnic group or ethnic groups, describes the struggle against violence, overcoming barbarism, the triumph of good over evil, and achieving a contradictory common human, civilizational development. Myths are morally instructive, spiritually elevate above the cruel world, orient them towards new meanings of existence, orient representatives of an ethnic group, an individual to a perfect society.

Mythological systems arose in antiquity among different peoples and, in a transformed form, retain their place in traditional cultures. However, mythological systems are correlated with modernity. This circumstance makes it possible to determine the vector of modern ethnocultural, civilizational development, becoming the subject of culturological, philosophical analysis.

2. Problem Statement

The ethnic culture is a multi-layered phenomenon that includes various components of material and spiritual production. The ethnic culture was carried out during a long historical development, interacting with the cultural values of different ethnic groups. Culture acquires an ethnic form based on

customs, traditions, mental, mythical, linguistic, religious, and economic characteristics. These features change under the influence of the achievements of civilizations, communications, cultures of other peoples.

3. Research Questions

Religion occupies a vital place in ethnic culture. Religion imparts a sacred character to ethnic culture. Religion systematically organizes ethnic culture, gives it a particular character, determined by their way of life, mentality, language, customs, and traditions. The relationship between ethnic culture and religion is always an interesting cognitive and important research problem. This problem requires a thorough analysis, identifying both specific and general parameters. In this regard, the problem posed is concretized, revealing the essence and characteristics of ethnic culture, its connection with national culture and religion.

1. In this regard, the concepts of "ethnic culture," "culture of an ethnos," "national culture," "mass culture" are correlated; their features and common aspects are revealed.

2. The spiritual characteristics of an ethnos, the role of religion in its cultural formation, highlighting the peculiarities of ethnic culture, and cultural interactions with foreign cultural values are revealed.

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the article is to reveal the relationship between ethnic culture and religious values, mastered, borrowed by an ethnos during its complex, contradictory socio-economic, spiritual development. Simultaneously, the peculiarities of the mutual influence of ethnic culture and religion, the general processes of sacralization in culture are established.

5. Research Methods

This study based on the following methodological approaches:

- an activity-based approach that considers a cultural artifact as a result of human activity, society,
- a systematic approach allows considering a cultural phenomenon as a system of interrelated parameters that allow it to be given a holistic character.

In the course of applying these methodologies in the study of culture and religion, their interrelationships, a comparative analysis is also used, which makes it possible to concretize and clarify certain aspects of phenomena associated with culture, including ethnic culture.

6. Findings

Science developed the concepts of "ethnic culture" and "culture of an ethnos." The culture of an ethnic group incorporates not only purely ethnic components but also values borrowed from the cultures of other peoples. The culture of an ethnic group contains both traditional cultural values and modern

scientific and technological achievements, becoming common to the cultures of many modern peoples. Ethnic culture is always traditional, though, as a system of material and spiritual values. Ethnic culture is subject to change under the influence of social crises, scientific and technological advances. Ethnic culture should be distinguished from national culture. A nation is a more complex and later social formation than an ethnos. With its formation, ethnic groups do not disappear. They continue their existence in the nation, i.e., in a more developed social order, which has a higher density of communications.

National culture exists along with a common language, economy, economy, and state. It stands out as one of the leading components of the social system. However, the national culture provides much more opportunities for differentiation and development. In it, the ethnic signs of culture do not disappear without a trace. They continue their lives separately from the dominant nation. For example, Jews, Armenians, Russians, Arabs, Croats, Mexicans, and other nations, living for a long time in different states, often retain their ethnic traits, religious values, attachment to their native ethnic group. However, in their basic socio-cultural parameters, they relate to the state in which they become citizens.

Ethnic and traditional cultures differ in their own special and common features. Traditional culture absorbs the historically established values developed by the people in the course of historical development. Often, the concept of "traditional culture" is also used in the meaning of folk culture; since traditional culture is always stable, changes in it are slow. Fairy tales, legends, images of heroes, and other values are important components of folk culture. Traditional culture includes the components of one ethnic group and many other ethnic groups that take part in its formation. There is a distinction between high (elite) culture and folk culture (folklore), interconnected, and the first is formed based on the second. Through specialization and professionalization, individual folk culture components are transformed into the elite culture, represented by a select, professionally trained circle of people. In this regard, mass culture should also be highlighted. Mass culture components are simplified in semantic and artistic terms, and therefore are available to everyone, acquiring a general character. Popular culture is active, aggressive, often displacing both high and popular culture, becoming the dominant one. Many subcultures of various groups are formed in society, determining their way of life, contacts, and worldview.

The spiritual development of an ethnos, along with folklore plots, is based on moral and religious values that are preserved in the ethnic culture itself. "In traditionalist societies, religion and myth played a dominant role in culture" (Stepin, 2011, p. 31). Very often, religious values outgrow ethnic culture, are included in the cultures of other peoples, forming a syncretic spiritual space, expanding a heterogeneous worldview. The religion professed by the ethnos is a definite result of its spiritual, mental activity. It is an initial attempt to answer the natural fears that frighten it. Other ethnic groups assimilate religious values created by a particular ethnic group. Thus, a common irrational world is formed, subject to natural, spontaneous processes, controlled by a powerful transcendental force. The scientific-materialistic explanation of the emergence of religion does not exhaust the questions of its origin. Religion tries to explain natural phenomena incomprehensible to people, attracting for this mysticism, an irrational state. Moreover, the fears that arise in this case are endowed with divine powers. A person's imagination works here; often, the images created by him contain ethnic traits and features. In the modern world, the attitude

towards religion has radically changed, people's fears have been minimized, although natural disasters cause no less fear and threat than in antiquity.

When considering the relationship between religion and nation, one should note their specific connection. Religion is a component of national culture. Therefore religion plays an active role in forming national identity, spiritual consolidation, and unity of people. So, something similar happened in the United States. In America, everyone should have faith, and no matter which one, as Huntington notes, "President Eisenhower stated on this occasion that our form of government does not make the slightest sense if we stop taking religion into account" (Huntington, 2004, p. 53). In modern, post-atheistic Russia, Orthodoxy, Islam, and other religions have increased significantly. Religion actively influences the formation of the ethnic and even political identity of the Russian peoples.

The symbiosis of ethnic and religious culture often entails the formation of religious subcultures uniting small groups of people adhering to different religious ideologies and relevant practices. Similar processes are observed in the North Caucasus. So, the region's peoples are distinguished by the presence of diverse ethnic, linguistic, mental characteristics that differ from each other, forming certain types of identities.

At the same time, many of them have a common spiritual basis, associated, for example, with the confession of Sunni Islam, which has its own forms of existence in the region: folk Islam, Sufi Islam. Thus, in Dagestan, Islam is represented by the Sufi tariqas – Naqshbandiyya, Qadiriyya, and Shaziliya, while in Chechnya and Ingushetia, there are two Sufi tariqas – Naqshbandiyya and Qadiriyya (Akayev, 2011), divided into many small groups – more than 32 virdas. They arose in the 19th-20th centuries. Their pioneers were Dagestan and Chechen Sufis, Awliya, many of whom were repressed, exiled, accused of fanaticism, obscurantism, rebellions, and anti-state activities. In Chechnya, Ingushetia, the places of their burials have been turned into ziyarats (mausoleums), today they are all reconstructed, the paths and roads leading to them have been cultivated. Many Muslim believers visit the burial places of saints, which is an important parameter for their spiritual and cultural lives. The local religious subculture is common for the Chechens and Ingush, making up an important part of the ethnic values of the region's Muslims.

7. Conclusion

Having pronounced features of conservatism, the ethnic culture of the North Caucasus peoples, of course, is largely influenced by modernity, which leads to the transformation of its periphery with the strength of the common core. So, starting from the 90s, such a religious and political trend of Islam, called "Wahhabism", has penetrated the North Caucasus into the ethnic cultures of the region's peoples, which represents an alternative to local traditional religious and ethnic values. Its impact on the regional Muslim culture gave rise to a confrontation between supporters of traditionalism and "innovators" advocating the purity of Islam. The latter accused the traditionalists of delusion, distortion of Islam, and therefore tried to re-Islamize the peoples of the region, making explicit attempts to destroy common religious traditions - visiting Sufi teachers' burial places cult of saints. Supporters of this trend introduced new cult practices into the region's Islamic culture, imposed an appropriate dress code and appearance on Muslims. Influencing young people, they tried to change their attitude to the deep-rooted ethnic traditions,

rituals, ideologically and politically oriented them towards countries with "pure" Islam. The contradictions between innovators and traditionalists have reached a tough antagonistic character. This situation required the implementation of measures of spiritual, cultural, and political opposition to manifestations of religious extremism, rejected by representatives of traditional Islamic culture, adapted to the all-Russian socio-cultural reality. Thus, there was a situation of the symbiotic interweaving of cultures of different substantive origins, where each of them seeks to dominate in its dogmatics and practice.

Ethnic culture, as the basis for a people's existence, undoubtedly, is transforming the influence of social, technological, and religious innovations. These innovations expand ethnic culture, adapt it to modernity and postmodern processes. The scientific analysis of ethnic culture suggests, on the basis of an activity-based and systematic approach, it can be applied to identify basic parameters, moments of solidity, spontaneity, their correlation, and to determine trends in the socio-cultural development of an ethnic group, its existence, while maintaining its core values. This study is important in modern global development, which is characterized by the emergence of crisis processes. Crisis processes affect people's life and well-being, their cultural attitudes, which are very often unchanged during the long historical and cultural development of a particular ethnic group.

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