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## **Problem of National Identity and Ways of its Resolution in Works of Adyghe and Karachay-Balkarian Authors**

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### **Abstract**

In modern times humanity is facing a crisis in many spheres, the spiritual and moral one being most urgent. Resort to the ethnocultural tradition based on the ethical-aesthetic ideas, local customary practices and traditional (adat) laws seems most effective to overcome the crisis phenomena. In this connection, the preservation of ethnocultural identity comes to the fore. The leading feature of modern literature is the interest to ethnic self-identity as a defensive reaction to globalization and leveling of the individual's self-categorization. Emotive prose and poetry by Adyghe and Karachay-Balkarian authors have been analyzed in the article with the view of determining the forms of manifestation of the heroes' ethnic identity, establishing the role of traditional concepts and archetypical ideas in the formation of the ethnic self-categorization and the development of their worldview.

**Keywords:** Ethnocultural identity, National character, Prose, Poetry, Traditions, Folklore, Myth, Circassian and Karachay-Balkarian literature, Symbol.

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In the modern era Russian society is marked by a crisis presented in such forms as “loss of common cultural orientation, activation of various forms of alienation, discredit of the value system” (Gurevich, 2006, p. 226). In this regard, the problem of national identity’s retention is being actualized. “A national idea, mobilizing all intellectual resources, should penetrate and form the core of its value-normative system and thereby determine the meaning of life of an ethnic society” (Kazharov, 2012, p. 63).

The intention to save the “ethnocultural originality” increased the interest of literature in national origins. “We must state,” writes Yu. M. Thagazitov, that the main intermediary in structuring the dialogue of the culture continues to be the national-artistic thinking. No one can present the national soul and mentality better than the artist, musician, and writer belonging to this nation. In a certain sense, we can even say that the spirituality of the people in the most prominent and comprehensive form can only be expressed in an artistic text, because besides the author’s demiurgic will and his natural talent, there is also an original semantics of the national language, its unique spirit ” (Thagazitov, 2017, p. 84).

### **Materials and Methods**

An integrated approach is used in the given paper. It combines elements of a comparative typological, system-holistic, and historical-literary analysis. Structural-analytical, synchronous-comparative and system methods were used in the work.

### **Discussion and Conclusion**

In the overwhelming majority of the contemporary authors’ texts, an inclination to the detailed ethnographic characteristics, the reproduction of customs and traditions is observed. This is due to the need to save the patterns of behavioral ethics that exist in the ethnosphere, imperatives and adat views. For this purpose, material about the history, culture, and folklore heritage of the people is being actively introduced into artistic practice. For example, in the M. Karmokov’ story “Myrihabzemschishsch” (“This is also about traditions”), as opposed to the traditional form of hospitality, common among the peoples of the North Caucasus (“Guest is the messenger of God” (Hescheertkhem y likuesch), a new (modern) “Reading” of the original adats is presented. If earlier the doors of the guest house were always open, and everyone could enter and freely accommodate there, so now it is not allowed to come without first notifying the owners. The older generation, seeing the guest in Kunatskaya (guest house), seated him in an honored place – zhantle. In this case, the owner himself sat down next to, only after insistent requests. The self-respecting Caucasian person escorted the guest to the edge of the village and, after saying goodbye, waited for him to move away for some distance. It was considered indecent to immediately return to the house. Now, M. Karmokov notes, they may not hold at all. Old traditions that determine the host’s behavior towards the guest are in the past (Karmokov, 1991). The basis of contrast (the result of the inversion in the value system) is not so much time or age, but moral and philosophical criterion.

Consideration in the “old – new” plane was one of the productive methods of ethnic-identification. The “old”, as a rule, is understood as a vector associated with the traditional ideas of society, moral and spiritual advantage, “new” correlates with the negative aspects of modernity – demoralization, destruction of morality and culture; former dominants and sociocultural codes are changed to opposed.

The author, demonstrating the psychology of the man in the street and the marginal, appeals to those value constants that formed the face of a mountaineer, a Caucasian man, educated in the tradition of *adygehabze* (the ethic code of Circassians) and *tau adet* (the ethic code of Karachays and Balkarians), who adopted firmness and courage from the age-old rocks, boldness and dexterity – at the turbulent rivers, holiness of the word – at the wise *aksakals* (old men).

“Adyghe Khabze for Circassians is, perhaps, more than a religion, more than a philosophical system of views on the world. This is the way of life, way of thinking. Adyghe khabze is the Adyg’s behavior from birth to going to another world” (Unezhev, 306).

It should be noted that we are talking about cultural patterns that have developed in the ethnic community, following them was universal and obligatory. The regulations concerned practically all components of life.

In the work of S. P. Berzegova-Kumekhova “Weset Guemyu” (“Impossible desire”) the custom associated with mourning events is reflected. The protagonist Muzrach on the deathbed bequests to his friend Nazir to pour cold spring water on his chest before burial. It was almost impossible to execute the will, because it contradicted adat installations and ideological principles. On another hand, not to fulfill the will of the deceased was also unacceptable.

"Itanemi, uesyatyr myzeschaue kaneme, Muzrach kypepler zyt: e aby y gascher, e y zhyler ibgynen khueyue kykhukuekynut, syt scheke zhyepeme, psomi khuen bzadzher kradzure ar iumpem zeraschynum shech lepk kytepkhe khunutekym" (Berzegova-Kumekhova, 2002, p. 42–43). (“If Muzrach had not fulfilled the will, he would have to leave his village, because the inhabitants would either condemn or reject him”).

... Having taken a mug of cold water, he approached the deceased (and he received a remark from imam). Muzrach was rescued by a wise decision of the elder:

"Lyzhym psy iub schkheschifykasch falem, zrigezykhri y iegum iz psy Nazir y iegum trigetkuiasch, itiane khedem schkh schytyskheri, sakypeu khuem dydeure psy schye shynakyr tiekiu-tiekiuu, iub-iubu zeryrafym khuedeu Nazirim y khede bgefem dikiasch". (Ibid, p. 49) (“The old man first took a sip of water himself, then carefully, little by little, drop by drop, poured it on Nazir’s chest”).

The 21st century, with its tendency to world integration, has fundamentally reformatted family values; social and economic cataclysms caused changes in the forms of marriage and family. In the process of cultural assimilation and acculturation, Circassians and Karachay-Balkarians have lost much of their ethnic microcosm. During the period of active transformations not only of social life but also of the family institution, an appeal to ethnocultural traditions acquires special relevance. It is no accident that the authors in their works represent the model of sacralization of family ties, basing on the totemistic ideas of ancestors. This phenomenon receives a fairly complete description in oral folk art, where the family and the home are interpreted as the highest achievement of the ethnic group, an indicator of stable and full-blooded life activity: “Yuyuzhoknukyunyuzhok” / “Who has no family doesn’t see the sunlight”. Transl. (Ketenchiev, Dodueva, Deveeva, 2018, p. 83). The archetypal views of the Mountaineers are clearly represented in the story “UnagueDakhe” (“Beautiful Family”) by ZhambekovaRabiya, where the connection between the sun and the earth is artistically related to a loving married couple. The sun is the universal father, and the earth is a wise, benevolent, caring mother. Adyghe namys (the honor of Adyghe) gives preference to the head of the family: his word is law for the rest of the family.

“Schilye anemre aby kyuschekhue sheblemre kateubguaue, nurybeke kyakhueupseu kashheshytsch. Aby y Bziy ieffim zykhezigepekykh y shebleri zei eyke tepselykhykym. Dapshaschi y zhiem schetsch...”. “Khuepssegueu, unem shymysch kykham khuedeu, keshage kelizyrakherakheu irageblegez. Sheshigueu, lyeufly yaye psori khuzeblakh, zishamygenshu yakhuzeffek psomki yoguapek, yagafe” (Zhambekova, 2009, p. 63) (“Mother earth and her offspring guard father, care about him. His children never let anybody talk about him badly. Unquestioningly listen to him. You can even envy. When he returns home, they take him like an expensive, respected guest. They serve delicious treats to the table, give him their warmth, tenderness”).

A special place in the traditional switching systems of the Circassians and the Karachai-Balkarians was held by the prohibitions called “avoidance customs”. They extended to relations between spouses, between parents and children, between the parents of the bride and groom. Frederick Dubois de Monpere wrote

that even in the nineteenth century among Circassians a married man did not dare to appear in public with his wife (a married man was not allowed to appear with his wife in public) (Unezhev, 2009, p. 229). This custom found its artistic embodiment in B. Mazihov's novella "Kafé" ("Dance"). The old man Shalaut (during the wedding of his youngest son) was invited to dance by her granddaughter Sataney. The dance touched the old man, buying a male tear rolled down his cheek. He remembered his deceased wife, how the elders forbade them to dance at the wedding of their eldest son (Mazikhov 2008). The story of B. Zhurtov "Shkheguse" ("Spouse") was also submitted in the same sociopsychological context. An elderly woman unwittingly witnessed the general condemnation of a young girl who "dared" to declare her feelings for the young man. Memories flooded the woman – at the time of her youth, not only to express sympathy to the young man she liked but also to openly look at him was not allowed. Her fate was decided by her parents (Zhurtov, 1997). A marriage was concluded by agreement between the parents of the bride and the parents of the bridegroom, based on the common law of the Circassians, known as "guschekuaeibze". This form of marriage goes back thousands of years. This is mentioned, for example, in the Nart epos (the epic monument of the majority of the North Caucasus peoples). According to the Nart customs, a boy and a girl born on the same night were to become husband and wife upon coming of age. Therefore, at the corners of the crib ("gushe") in which the children lay, the narts cut out the mark of betrothal. Nobody had the right to care for the named girlfriend (Unezhev, 2009)].

The analysis of the works showed the striving of modern authors to reproduce traditional models of communicative ethics, to appeal to the patterns of spiritual culture, mythopoetic universals and archetypes. Such texts perform important social functions to save and transmit values, outlining the ways out of the current socio-cultural crisis. The stories about the ancestors and times of creation are directly addressed to the collective consciousness of the people and go back directly to the practices of oral creativity. For North Caucasian authors folklore was an expression of national spirit, national identity, and transmission of ethnopsychology. The main image of A. Kamergoev is the sun: "Tsyhur tsyhusch. Dyger schyieschi. Dyger dygenusch, tsyhur shimyemi. Aue tsyhupser nekh-keshte Dygem, a zyrsch zehezyschykyu shieri ... "(Kamergoev, 2007, p. 67) ("Man is man. Because there is a sun. The sun will be even if there is no man. But the sun prefers the soul, because only it is capable to understand it"). The lyrical hero says that everyone has something that organizes his inner world. "Seri syeshsiuezyde!" – khetiguapeukrepseu ("I have my own sun" – let everyone say it).

Si uezdygueu – dygeshyrsch.

Dyge-anemmahuershiof.

Zheshyrhuame, nurkeshyr

Zepiplyhumeplyryf.

Si uzdegeudygeshyr,

Dygeanertkhurepseu (Ibid).

My light is the sun child.

Mother Sun breastfeeds the day.

When night falls, the Earth, shining,

Inspects, guards the neighborhood.

My light is the sun child,

Let the Sun-Mother live for us.

The idea of intergenerational spiritual continuity has always acted as one of the core values of the highlanders – it is clearly present even in epic works. Conceptual stability ensures the stability of symbolism

and image rows. In the Adyghe epic poetry, the word "sun" means a positive hero, and solar epithets serve as a symbol of poetic exaltation of these heroes. For example, Satanei says to his son Sosruko:

Sosruko is our kan,  
Sosruko is our light.

Another cosmological symbol is "sabydyge" (the divine "solar child"), indicating nartsshikhulague ("the milky way"):

- Do you see a trail of horses in the sky? [Milky Way].  
- We see.

"When you go on a hike and return, do not lose it – and do not get lost (emphasized by us. – E. B., F. U.)" (Kudaeva, 2008, p. 115).

Muslims considered the Sun to be the sign of the existence of Allah, and because of this they respected to the sun. Achieving perfection in spiritual life means spiritual constants. Salvation is in spiritual succession.

"Despite the common notions of Karachais, Balkarians, Russians about many elements of the physical picture of the world, the national-specific semantics of astronoms makes possible to determine some features of the mental representation of celestial bodies in the culture of genetically unrelated ethnic groups" (Bashiyeva, Ketenchiev, 2017, p. 181).

Another sacred symbol is the tree. In B. Kagermazov's story "Myeryseym and zheup" (Kagermazov, 2006) ("The Answer of the Apple Tree") mythological ideas of the people about totems trees are accumulated. The tree represents the main dichotomous concepts: "good-evil", "male-female".

Pear and apple trees are related to masculinity's concept. Bans on the cutting of fruit trees have always occurred in the ethnic consciousness of the North Caucasus mountaineers.

"It was forbidden to burn and cut down a fruit tree, especially apple trees. Harm, especially cutting down a flowering tree, was considered blasphemy and was equivalent to killing a pregnant woman" (Kudaeva, 2008, p. 150–151).

The image of an apple tree is clearly outlined by the Balkarian poet S. Gurtuyev in the poem "Tert Alma Terek" ("Four Apple Trees"). This is "not just a real object, it is a symbolism reflecting continuity, cyclicality, incessancy of life" (Uzdenova, 2010, p. 562); three apple trees – in terms of the number of heirs – blossom on the land scorched by war, marking the immortality of life.

The process of reassessing values, which touched various aspects of human life in the post-Soviet period, led to the search for new axiological guidelines, but cross-cutting conceptual and figurative transitions still define the general outline of the ethnic worldview and moral systems. As a result, an expected return to the origins of folklore and mythology is observed in the works of Kabardino-Circassian and Karachay-Balkarian authors today. The search for the algorithm of preservation of ethnic culture, comprehension of the foundations of national identity and traditional law are becoming necessary conditions for the full development of society and its moral "healing".

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