

DOI: 10.7596/taksad.v8i3.2249

Citation: Igosheva, M. A., Paliy, I. G., Krolman, M. L., Takhtamyshev, V. G., & Kasyanov, V. V. (2019). Ethnic Identity as a Cultural Safety Resource of Local Communities in the Context of Globalization. *Journal of History Culture and Art Research*, 8(3), 277-284. doi:<http://dx.doi.org/10.7596/taksad.v8i3.2249>

Ethnic Identity as a Cultural Safety Resource of Local Communities in the Context of Globalization

**Marina A. Igosheva¹, Irina G. Paliy², Marianna L. Krolman³,
Vladimir G. Takhtamyshev⁴, Valery V. Kasyanov⁵,**

Abstract

In the context of globalization, the main threat to the cultural security of local communities is the spiritual expansion of Western civilization, which results in changes in the worldview and lifestyle of people. Under the threat of spiritual expansion, they activate protective mechanisms in order to preserve, reproduce, and transmit cultural norms and values that serve as spiritual guidelines in social uncertainty and global chaos. The ethnic identity, being one of these mechanisms, has the capacity to ensure the ontological security of the community, preserve its cultural identity and mobilize it for positioning and defending its interests.

The constructivist paradigm serves the methodological basis of the study and allows considering the ethnic identity as a way of organizing the socio-cultural existence of community on the basis of its "symbolic" boundaries' identification. The transformational approach which makes it possible to characterize the processes of the modern world and their impact on local societies is methodologically significant for the study. The concept of "socio-cultural crisis", manifested in the destruction of the value-semantic and symbolic world of ethnic communities is conceptual to identify the destructive influence of globalization processes on the life of local communities. The riskological approach allows revealing the specifics of the current risks to the cultural safety of local communities. The study concludes that under the risks and threats to the cultural security of local communities, they activate the resource potential of ethnic identity, which allows maintaining their personal integrity and socio-cultural uniqueness. The resource potential of ethnic identity makes it possible to act as a social behavior regulator and ensure the cultural security of both individuals and groups, forming symbolic boundaries between the worlds of "us" and "them".

Keywords: Ethnic identity, Cultural security, Globalization, Glocalization, Identity crisis, Risk society, Spiritual expansion.

¹ Rostov State Transport University, Rostov on Don, Russia, igosheva_marina@mail.ru

² Rostov State University of Economics, Rostov-on-Don, Russia, filosofiya327@yandex.ru

³ Rostov State University of Economics, Rostov-on-Don, Russia, mkrolm2n@mail.ru

⁴ Rostov State Transport University, Rostov on Don, Russia, tahtamishev2012@yandex.ru

⁵ Kuban State University, Krasnodar, Russia, culture@kubsu.ru

Introduction

The modern global transformations affecting political, economic and cultural spheres of social life violate the usual forms of peoples' existence. The radical restructuring of social reality actualizes the contradictions generated by the clash of globalization and counter-globalization trends. In the modern world there takes place intensification of integration processes and localization of traditional cultures; the dynamism of social transformations and relative stability of ethnic life; formation of global worldview and preservation of ethnic consciousness. These contradictions indicate the transitive state of the world system, accompanied by both instability of the current state of social existence, uncertainty and unpredictability of further development of mankind (Shevchenko et al., 2018).

Globalization and its impact on the world system is one of the most discussed topics in the scientific community. Despite the common understanding of the essence of globalization processes, scientists try to determine the key component of these processes.

Some researchers emphasize the importance of the emergence of a global financial and information space that defines almost all the spheres of human activity (Delyagin, 2000, pp.133-134). The others define globalization as "the process of weakening traditional territorial, socio-cultural, political and state barriers which were used to isolate the peoples from each other, protected them from disordered external influences and formation of a new, non-protectionist system of international interaction and interdependence" (Panarin, 2003, p.137).

Today, they treat globalization not only as a process of economic, political and cultural integration of regions, states, and peoples into a single world system but also as an instrument through which the developed countries establish their power over the rest of the world (Vodenko et al., 2018). The experts state that globalization or mondializm ideology is "a part of globalization leaders' propaganda policy" (Dubovtsev, 2007, p.53). Therefore, it is obvious that in conditions of the reorganization of the modern world system there takes place redistribution of the spheres of influence.

In this regard, the current situation associated with tightening of geo-economic and geopolitical confrontation and the global struggle of alternative projects for further social development is described by researchers as a "risk society". In such circumstances, ethnic communities become the most vulnerable ones, as globalization seeks to destroy their world in both material and spiritual dimensions. Awareness of this fact determines the social and scientific importance of identifying the resource of ethnic identity in ensuring the cultural security of local societies.

Methods and Materials

The choice of relevant theoretical and methodological tools is of great importance in the framework of this study as we analyze the possibility of ethnic identity to ensure the cultural security of the local community in conditions of modern global transformations.

The constructivist paradigm developed by the Norwegian anthropologist F. Barth dominates the scientific discourse in the sphere of ethnic identity understanding. The main idea of the researcher is that ethnic identity is not just a fact of social reality, but a construct through which there takes place organization of socio-cultural existence of community based on positioning of its "symbolic" boundaries. This approach treats the ethnic boundaries as artificially created but significant differences that define the specificity of a social group (Barth, 2006).

A similar view is shared by the American anthropologists G. DeVos and L. Romanucci-Ross (1982), who argue that ethnic identity is focused on the past form of identification, embodied in the cultural traditions of an individual or a group. In this approach, the ethnic identity is considered to be symbolic or emblematic use of any aspect of culture by a group in order to differentiate itself from the other groups. Thus, the use of ethnic markers is of purely functional character, which allows them to be used in the group interests in different social conditions.

It seems that the constructivist methodology gives grounds for the study of resource potential of ethnic identity in the modern world, where takes place a struggle of alternative trends of social development.

The transformational approach is conceptual for this study as it allows characterizing the processes of the modern world and their impact on life of local societies. In this regard, it is advisable to use the basic provisions of the "social trauma" concept (Shtompka, 2001) and "socio-cultural crisis" (Evgenieva, 2012). P. Shtompka draws attention to the traumatic nature of social transformations, manifested in the destruction of the institutional framework of society, erosion of collectively shared meanings and values, fragmentation of society, which contributes to radicalization of local forms of identity (Shtompka, 2001).

The researchers associate the socio-cultural crisis with the "destructive trend of the disintegration of symbolic, value and semantic foundation of social relations, accompanied by the emergence of numerous substitutional ("proxy") identities" (Evgenieva, 2012, p.29). As a result, there is a process of localization and fragmentation of social space.

In the study of ethnic identity as a resource of ensuring the cultural security of local society, it is advisable to use the riskological approach (Beck, 2000; Luhmann, 1994), which allows identifying the specifics of modern risks. Analyzing the functioning features of modern society, the researchers note their riskogenic nature, manifested in the uncertainty of the present and the future. This state of modern society is described by the term "risk society" (Beck, 2000).

Within the framework of this approach, the current social reality is interpreted as extremely risky due to the contradictory processes associated, on the one hand, with renewal of society and high level of technological development, and on the other hand, with the growth of tension, social chaos, civilizational disasters and the crisis of identity.

Discussion

Currently, due to the emergence of new risks and threats, they begin to widely treat the problem of public security. It used to be treated as a military, economic, environmental problem, etc., but now politicians, military officers, and scientists are increasingly raising issues of information, spiritual and cultural security.

It should be noted that scientific discourse has not yet developed a holistic concept of cultural security. The study of this security aspect was carried out mainly in the context of social security problems but gradually began to form ideas about its specifics.

In the works of foreign authors, cultural security is treated not only as a system of protection from possible cultural threats but as a set of conditions under which the culture will develop safely, under its own laws (Forrest, 2004). The Russian scientists offer a comprehensive approach to understanding the problem of cultural security, including "protection of culture from threats, and, at

the same time, providing conditions for its harmonious development" (Romanova & Marmilova, 2008, p.92).

Some researchers consider ethno-cultural security to be the key component of cultural security. The latter is a "state of sustainable functioning and integral reproduction of cultures... and their ethno-cultural identity with the free exchange of cultural skills between them and increasing the degree of adaptability to developing social changes" (Perepelkin, 1999, p.9).

Concerning ethnic communities, cultural security can be treated as a state of society in which it can preserve its cultural code embedded in the historical memory of people. Historical memory "becomes the existential space in which the individual finds his identity, his meaning of existence, the basis for unification with the community" (Evgenieva & Titov, 2017, p.126). In this sense, preservation of historical memory is the basis for identity preservation as well.

It seems that the main threat to the cultural security of ethnic communities is the global spiritual expansion of Western civilization. It is carried out through the displacement of traditional ethnic value systems and the replacement of their values. Scientists note that "spiritual expansion has always been an integral part of economic and political expansion of developed countries, as the ruling elites of these countries understand that it is impossible to dominate the other peoples without control over their culture, information sphere, science, education system, the areas of social relations that have a direct impact on formation of national spiritual values" (Tonkonogov, 2014, p.142).

Moreover, "reformatting historical memory of the people, filling the public consciousness with alien and destructive values, images, myths" is one of the spiritual expansion technologies (Myslivec, Romanov, 2018, p.13). The destruction of historical memory as a special cultural structure leads to the destruction of its identity. It should be noted that new information technologies have great opportunities to influence people's minds imposing alien cultural systems, introducing destructive ideas that affect patterns of social behavior. Resistance to these tendencies, as the researchers note, can be largely related to the development of the education system as a factor of national security (Vodenko, 2019; Vodenko et al., 2018).

Currently, in the context of the global information society, some political forces begin to actively interfere in historical consciousness and historical memory of the peoples of other countries, trying to format them for their own purposes. A natural result of the cultural expansion of Western countries, "should be either disappearance of non-Western cultural models at all, or a significant change in individual elements of such models and their introduction into the global system" (Rahno, 2009, p.245)

It is obvious that in conditions associated with the emergence of new risks and threats, the actualization of ethnic identity is a response to the westernization of the modern world. The ethnic identity has a resource of preserving and reproducing historical memory of society, which becomes an organized "normative" structure, inscribed in the general matrix of collective identity, confirming it with the help of the arguments of the "past" (Semenova, 2012). Thus, the ethnic identity outlines the area of "local" existence of culture, allowing a person to relate himself to a certain system of values that act as spiritual support in increasing uncertainty of the modern world.

Assessing the risks of globalization, scientists point out their origins of "innovative chaos and socio-cultural crisis, accompanied by the breakdown of previously adopted norms, rules and patterns of behavior that lead to "exposure" and restoration of the old archaic layers of cultural life" (Shtompel,

2010, p.29). In this case, ethnic identity is a way of preserving and transferring traditional values. The conservatism of these values "cements" the forms of collective behavior, first of all, its regulatory, value and ideological basis. Awareness of belonging to a particular social group helps the community members to protect from traumatic social transformations.

Currently, the problem of ethnic identity in the context of global transformations is considered mainly in the context of "identity crisis", "ethnic Renaissance", and "glocalization".

The researchers state that the modern identity crisis is caused by radical social transformations that change the usual living conditions. Any social transformation is accompanied by a "crisis of identity", associated with "a sense of loss of semantic richness of the previous forms of social identification and search for the new ones, meeting the basic needs of the person in the sense and contributing to the most adequate adaptation to the changing social reality" (Lebedeva, 1999, p.48). As a result, there is a certain difficulty in understanding the cultural identity, blurred by the spread of global culture patterns.

At the same time, despite the disorientation in the social space, people today are more than ever focused at finding stability and certainty, which, according to E. Hobsbawm, is manifested in the search for "groups to which they could belong steadily and for a long time, in a world where everything moves and nothing is reliable" (Hobsbawm, 1998, p.119). For this reason, the interest in self-identification with a particular group is not lost. On the contrary, in conditions of social uncertainty, it becomes "...a convenient refuge that provides security and confidence..." (Bauman, 2002, p.85).

S. Huntington argues that in the modern world the problem of identity crisis affects not only the local societies but also the entire states. In particular, he draws attention to the fact that the problem of American identity is unique, but America is not unique in facing such a problem. Almost everywhere people question, rethink, and redefine what they have in common and what sets them apart from others. "Who we are? What do we belong to?" (Huntington, 2004, p.322). It should be noted that in Huntington's concept the crisis of identity is presented in two aspects: 1) as defense of civilizational uniqueness in the global world to confront the challenges of non-Western societies; 2) as acquisition of internal civilizational homogeneity by moving away from the spiritual expansion of Western culture to mobilization of one's own society.

It is obvious that the cause of the identity crisis is rooted in the radical transformation of social reality, which destroyed the old ways of organizing society and gave rise to chaos, uncertainty, and instability of the world. Scientists state that these conditions of the modern world "undermine one of the basic human aspirations – the desire for "existential security" (Shtompka, 1996, p.152).

In scientific literature, the modern "ethnic Renaissance" is mainly explained by psychological reasons. According to the theory of affiliation, a person as a social subject has a need for group membership. Such a property actualized in conditions of social disorganization makes ethnic identity the most acceptable way to feel a part of the whole and to find psychological support. The experts state that the revival of ethnic identity is a form of protection against the real or imagined threats associated with radical social transformations (Gudkov, 1999; Shnirelman, 2004).

The modern researchers treat ethnic identity not only in the context of identity crisis and ethnic Renaissance. Some researchers draw attention to the fact that globalization processes are accompanied by a counter-trend, associated with the actualization of ethnic identity as a way to cultural identity preservation (Robertson, 1995; Giddens, 2000; Ritzer, 2004).

In scientific discourse, these processes are described by the means of "glocalization" concept, which conveys the specificity of modern world development, consisting in the presence of an inextricable link between globalization and localization (Robertson, 1995). The use of "glocalization" concept allows reflecting the complex process of intertwining the global trends of social development and local, regional features of cultural development of certain peoples, when the "global" and the "local" do not exclude, but complement each other.

The analysis of the approaches developed in scientific knowledge shows that in conditions of ambiguous and contradictory processes of globalization, the ethnic identity as a way of sacralizing and reproducing the cultural code of local communities is exposed to serious risks and threats. At the same time, it has a certain resource potential that provides stability, certainty in the representation of the social group and the individual about themselves and their place in the world.

Conclusion

Global transformations have a destructive impact on life of local communities, first of all, on their institutional foundations. There takes place a leveling of objectively existing differences and standardization of cultural development. A significant role in this process is played by the massive information impact resulting in changes of the worldview and lifestyle of people (Rudkovsky, 2018, p.79).

In the context of the threat to historically established foundations of social and cultural life, there activate the protective mechanisms that allow preserving, reproducing and transmitting cultural norms and values which act as spiritual guidelines in the environment of social uncertainty and global chaos. In particular, the resource potential of ethnic identity allows to maintain personal integrity and socio-cultural uniqueness of the community; to act as a regulator of social behavior, to ensure cultural security of both individuals and groups, forming symbolic boundaries between the worlds of "us" and "them".

Thus, belonging to a group that identifies itself by ethnic criteria allows this social community to form a comfort zone in which the original life orientations and standards of social behavior are reproduced to resist the "turbulence" of the modern world.

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