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THE MODERN ETHNIC IDENTITY OF THE KALMYK ETHNIC GROUP: THE INFLUENCE OF MATERIAL CULTURE AND RITUAL PRACTICES

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СОВРЕМЕННАЯ ЭТНИЧЕСКАЯ ИДЕНТИЧНОСТЬ КАЛМЫЦКОГО ЭТНОСА: ВЛИЯНИЕ МАТЕРИАЛЬНОЙ КУЛЬТУРЫ И РИТУАЛЬНЫХ ПРАКТИК

Abstract. The article is devoted to the influence of material culture and ritual practices on the modern ethnic identity of the Kalmyk people. Currently, a kind of ethnic "renaissance" is taking place in Kalmykia, which manifests itself both in the transformation and reactualization of existing ethnic trends, as well as in the construction (reconstruction) of neo-ethnics, the search for new motives of ethnic identity. In addition, there is a local "local" identity, an association of oneself with the administrative region of residence, each of which has its own established ethnocultural specifics. Such ethnotransformation processes were reflected in the related religious and civic affiliation, in the view of one's own history and one's own place in this world. The specificity of the ethnic "renaissance" in modern Kalmyk society is associated with the processes of ethnocultural adaptation of Kalmyks among the peoples of the Volga region and the North Caucasus after their arrival on the Volga in the XVII century. In the XIX-XX centuries, the reduction of pasture lands led to a crisis of nomadic economy and caused the gradual transition of the Kalmyk people to a sedentary lifestyle. However, the Kalmyks did not copy the way of life of neighboring sedentary peoples, but adapted it to their needs based on their own ideas about the world order. Ethnic specificity is reflected in the rituals of the life cycle, as well as calendar rituals. Currently, there has been a change in the maternity rite only in the methods and place of delivery. However, during the prenatal period, food and behavioral prohibitions imposed on a woman persist. Thus, the isolated residence of Kalmyks in the Lower Volga region in a non-ethnic, nonconfessional and foreign-speaking region, connected by common origin, common history, customs and aware of themselves as a whole since the 19th century, led to the formation of

Аннотация. Статья посвящена вопросам влияния материальной культуры и ритуальных практик на современную этническую идентичность калмыцкого народа. В настоящее время в Калмыкии происходит своеобразный этнический «ренессанс», который проявляет себя как в трансформации реактуализации И уже существующих этнических трендов, так и в конструировании (реконструировании) неоэтники, поиска новых мотивов этнической идентичности. Помимо этого, существует и местная «локальная» идентичность, ассоциация себя с административным районом проживания, каждый из которых обладает своей сложившейся этнокультурной спецификой. Подобные этнотрансформационные процессы отразились в смежной религиозной гражданской И принадлежности, во взгляде на свою историю и собственное место в этом мире. Специфика этнического «ренессанса» В современном калмыцком обществе связана с процессами этнокультурной адаптации калмыков среди народов Поволжья и Северного Кавказа после их прихода на Волгу в XVII в. В XIX-XX вв. сокращение пастбищных угодий привело к кризису кочевого хозяйства и вызвало постепенный переход калмыцкого народа на оседлый образ жизни. Однако калмыки не стали копировать жизненный уклад соседних – оседлых народов, а приспособили его к своим нуждам исходя из собственных представлений о мироустройстве. Этническая специфика отражается и в обрядах жизненного цикла, а также календарной обрядности. В родильной обрядности в настоящее время произошли изменение только в способах и месте проведения родов. Однако в дородовый период сохраняются налагаемые на женщину пищевые и поведенческие запреты. Таким образом, обособленное проживание калмыков в Нижнем Поволжье в иноэтничном, иноконфессиональном и иноязычном регионе, связанных обшим происхождением, общей историей, обычаями и осознающих себя как единое целое с XIX в.,



their ethnic identity. Since the second half of the twentieth century, when the Kalmyks gradually lost some of their specific features, this led to a change in ethnic identity. The processes of changing various aspects of ethnic culture represent the life of an ethnic group, a living process of its development and transformation.

Key words: Kalmyks, ethnic identity, ethnos, ethno-cultural interaction, traditional culture, ritual and commemorative practices, the crisis of nomadic cattle breeding.

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привело к формированию своей этнической идентичности. Со второй половины XX в., когда калмыки постепенно утратили часть своих специфических особенностей это привело к изменению этнической идентичности. Процессы изменения различных аспектов этнической культуры и являют собой жизнь этноса, живой процесс его развития и преображения.

Ключевые слова: калмыки, этническая идентичность, этнос, этнокультурное взаимодействие, традиционная культура, ритуальные и коммеморативные практики, кризис кочевого скотоводства.

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Introduction.

The study of the processes of changing the structure of the ethnic and civil identity of the Kalmyk ethnos in ritual and commemorative practices is relevant, because at the present stage, a kind of ethnic "renaissance" is taking place, which manifests itself both in the transformation and re-actualization of already existing ethnic trends, and in the construction (reconstruction) of neo-ethnics, the search for new motives of ethnic identity.

These trends are characteristic of all ethnic groups that have entered the modern stage of development, including the ethnic groups of Russia. Kalmyks are no exception; they also have a more complex identity structure, and new forms of ethnicity are being formed. An example is identifying oneself with the "Oirats", referring to a historical group of Western Mongolian tribes. Traditional subethnic identification into four groups (Torguts, Derbets, Hosheuts, Buzavs) in the modern world also experiences a tendency to branch into generic subsections of identity (Tsoros, Hoyts, etc.) [2, p. 4].

In addition, there is also a local "local" identity, an association of oneself with the administrative region of residence, each of which has its own established ethnocultural specifics [1, p. 135-143]. Such ethnotransformation processes were reflected in related religious and civic affiliations, in the view of one's history and one's own place in this world.

Thus, we can say that the "renaissance" of ethnicity in the modern world has complicated the structure of ethnic identity and created the need for ethnographic research into its transformation. To better understand the specifics of the ethnic "renaissance" in modern Kalmyk society, it is necessary to turn to the origins of the formation of the ethnic group, to the process of ethnocultural adaptation of Kalmyks among the peoples of the Volga region and the North Caucasus after their arrival on the Volga in the 17th century.

The purpose of the article is to study the influence of material culture and ritual practices on the modern ethnic identity of the Kalmyk people.

Materials and methods of research.

The work used field materials [15] collected by the authors in Tselinny, Gorodovikovsky and Ketchenerovsky districts of the Republic of Kalmykia in 2023, as well as archival and published sources. It should be noted that the problems of material culture and ritual practices among the Kalmyks began to be fully studied in the second half of the 20th century. Researchers U.E. Erdniev, D.D. Shalkhakov, E.P. Bakaeva, E.-B.M. Guchinova, M.M. Batmaev, T.I. Sharaeva [3; 4; 6; 8; 14; 17] and others studied various aspects of the traditional culture of the Kalmyk people. At the same time, the issues of forming the modern identity of the Kalmyks, for a number of reasons, were not at the center of their interests.

The methodological basis of the study is a synergetic approach, which presupposes the unity of general scientific and special scientific methods used with the priority of comparative historical and systemic methods, the unity of historical and logical, consideration of the individual and social in their dialectical unity.

Results and its discussion

The ethnocultural interaction of Kalmyks with the peoples of the Volga region and the North Caucasus noticeably intensified in the 19th–20th centuries, when the reduction of pasture lands led to a crisis in the nomadic economy and caused a gradual transition of the Kalmyk people to a sedentary lifestyle. However, the Kalmyks did not copy the way of life of neighboring settled peoples, but adapted it to their needs based on their own ideas about the world order.

Thus, in the summer, Kalmyks roamed the steppe and spent the winter in dugouts. At the beginning of the 19th century housing construction in the Kalmyk steppe was influenced by the architecture of the cities and villages of the Lower Volga region, where the local population, mostly Russian, built houses of stone, brick and wood, from which the Kalmyks adopted the experience of building permanent housing. However, in more remote areas of the steppe, the cost of building materials such as stone, brick, and wood increased sharply due to the complexity of transportation, which made permanent housing inaccessible to residents of the western and southern uluses. Therefore, the Kalmyks of these uluses initially built the most primitive types of



housing – dugouts. A new stage began in the development of permanent housing for Kalmyks, when in 1846 a decree "On the settlement of roads in the Kalmyk lands of the Astrakhan province" was issued [11, p. 725-726]. From this period, as a result of the settlement of roads in the Kalmyk uluses, peasant migrants from Southern Russia and Ukraine appeared. Immigrants from the Voronezh, Tambov, Kharkov, Yekaterinoslav and Tauride provinces brought to Kalmykia a new, previously little-known type of housing – an adobe hut without a ceiling or a mud hut. It was a structure made of clay bricks or brushwood coated with clay. This type of dwelling by that time was already widespread in the northern Black Sea steppes, the North Caucasus and partly on the Lower Don.

The ethnic specificity of Kalmyks is noticeably manifested in their diet. This was especially pronounced with the appearance of fish dishes in the diet. Until the 19th century Kalmyks consumed fish only sporadically. However, the process of mass ruin of pastoralists in the 19th century. influenced the development of fishing among the Kalmyks. Residents of the Yandyko-Mochazhny and Khosheutovsky uluses, located next to the Volga and other large bodies of water, were the first to eat fish [10, p. 20].

The crisis of nomadic cattle breeding also increased the demand among Kalmyks for vegetables and fruits. From the middle of the 19th century extremely impoverished Kalmyk families in coastal areas began to grow and consume vegetables and fruits. At the same time, flour and cereal dishes began to appear in Kalmyk cuisine, which was the result of the development of otkhodnichestvo among Kalmyks and the Russian-Ukrainian resettlement movement. At the same time, the Kalmyks creatively modified these dishes, introducing new ingredients and cooking methods. For example, pieces of fruit began to be added to the bulmg choux pastry dish; various porridges with milk appeared (rice, buckwheat, semolina, etc.) [7, p. 74; 8, p. 117].

At the beginning of the 18th century traditional Kalmyk clothing began to include some elements of clothing of other peoples. For example, from the 18th century. The traditional Kalmyk men's costume – the lavshig robe – begins to be replaced by a beshmet (byushmud) [5, p. 148]. The beshmet was a single-breasted caftan, which was fastened at the waist with silk loops and small buttons. The popularity of the beshmet led to the fact that by the end of the 19th century. only the older generation wore a cloth robe. According to most pre-revolutionary researchers, the beshmet was borrowed from the Caucasian peoples. As a result of our research, we can assume that the basis of the beshmet was the traditional Circassian men's costume of the 18th century, since the degree of ethnocultural ties with the Kabardians was quite high. The fact that the beshmet is borrowed specifically from the Caucasian peoples is supported by the fact that the costume contains such elements as gazyri – leather sockets for wooden tubes, where rifle cartridges were previously inserted (4–8 pieces on each side), a stand-up collar and a typesetting belt, which was a mandatory attribute of the beshmet and was called serkish bus (Circassian belt) [16]. Once on the "Kalmyk soil", the beshmet underwent a number of transformations that brought it closer to the traditional costume. In particular, according to the Kalmyk tradition, the sleeves were not sewn



in, they were sewn longer than the arms, ended in funnel-shaped cuffs at the wrists and were gathered into folds at the elbows. The Kalmyk ornament on the braid, cuffs and collar gave the beshmet a unique flavor. Already by the beginning of the 20th century. Residents of the coastal and Volga uluses wore traditional clothes only for holidays [14].

Ethnic specificity is reflected in the rituals of the life cycle, as well as calendar rituals. In maternity rituals, only the methods and location of childbirth have changed. Today, to save the life of the child and mother, the woman in labor is sent to a specialized medical institution, where she is under the supervision of medical workers. However, during the prenatal period, dietary and behavioral prohibitions imposed on women remain. The practice of turning to healers for the safe birth of a child continues, with preference given to representatives of Tatar and Russian nationality. This contributes to the fact that the methods of treatment they offer become widely known among Kalmyks and the most used, which contradicts the traditional ideas of Kalmyks about the world around them [21, p. 56]. Among representatives of some Kalmyk clans, we have recorded a number of prohibitions associated with the subethnic division of Kalmyks. Particularly highlighted are prohibitions on actions by a pregnant woman that could cause harm on a sacred or physical level to her husband's close relatives. Representatives of the western regions (Buzavs - former Don Cossacks), as a result of long-term cohabitation with immigrants of Russian and Ukrainian nationality, and later the Germans, preference in the diet of a pregnant woman is given to plant products.

After giving birth, a Kalmyk woman is discharged home, where relatives can immediately come to the child to congratulate her; here we can note a change in the structure of Kalmyk rituals. So, if in the past the rituals of initiation and the first visits to relatives took place only seven days after the umbilical cord fell off, now this period has been reduced to several days [18, p. 117-153]. There is currently no custom of storing the umbilical cord, however, we have recorded the preservation by some Kalmyks of the umbilical cord of a newborn born in the 60–70s of the last century, which indicates a recent departure from this custom. The naming process especially clearly shows the ethnic identity of the Kalmyks. If earlier naming took place after the initiation ceremony, then in the modern period the choice of a name for a newborn occurs in the maternity hospital upon discharge. It can be noted that in the 50–60s Kalmyks began to have two names: the Russian name was written down in official documents, and the Kalmyk name was used in the family. For example: in documents - Larisa, at home – Baira [15; 7, p. 4].

In the family and marital relations of the Kalmyks, patrilineal exogamy is observed, including some archaic elements of matrilocal marriage. Until the middle of the 20th century. exogamy was dictated by a strict ban on marriage until the seventh generation in the paternal family. The marriage took place after matchmaking, with a symbolic ransom payment. The bride had to have a dowry that fully provided the interior decoration of the home and household items. Close relatives of both parties to the marriage provided all possible assistance to them in collecting the necessary funds for the main wedding ceremonies. Help from relatives was expressed in financial and material support.



Polygamy was not practiced in traditional society. There are only isolated cases where another wife was taken, but only with the consent of the first wife and because of her childlessness. Marriage through bride kidnapping, although it did occur, was an extremely rare occurrence. Over the last century, the structure of traditional Kalmyk wedding rituals has undergone significant changes caused by the transition from a nomadic to a sedentary lifestyle, foreign ethnic surroundings, the period of deportation of Kalmyks to Siberia, etc. Many stages that were conditioned in the past by nomadic life have completely disappeared from the structure of the Kalmyk wedding. The understanding of the role of traditional wedding participants has been significantly lost, but it has not lost its ethnic identity. The wedding cycle of a modern Kalmyk wedding opens with the acquaintance of representatives of the two parties to be married.

A traditional Kalmyk wedding is a complex set of various customs and rituals that incorporate the ideological, social, legal norms and aesthetic ideas of the Kalmyks. Each subethnic group of Kalmyks had local peculiarities of wedding ceremonies and their own wedding symbols. However, in the wedding rituals of Kalmyks XIX–XX centuries there were more similarities than differences. In the traditional Kalmyk wedding cycle, there are three main stages: pre-wedding, wedding, post-wedding. The main stages of the wedding ceremony take place before sunset, regardless of location. Within each stage, some rituals were lost.

Currently, all wedding ceremonies are held from the morning of one day to the morning of the next for rural areas, for the urban population – one day. The practice of donating shoulder clothing has been partially lost. The true meaning of bringing a live ram to a wedding has been lost: in the past, it was used to perform the ritual of fire sacrifice on the side of the bride after her departure. Currently, the practice of performing this ritual takes place only in those clans where there are senior representatives of the clan who are well informed in traditional rituals. However, in rural areas, bringing a live ram is still an integral part of the gifts brought by the groom at a wedding; the urban population has practically not preserved this practice. On the groom's side, before entering the house, the bride bows at the threshold. Instead of a felt bedding, a specially brought small mattress is used. Marriage registration is carried out at the registry office. During the Soviet period, a peculiar ritual developed: after the wedding, the newlyweds, accompanied by their relatives, go around the main attractions of the locality. The urban population actively practices holding a wedding party together between two families, which is explained by economic reasons. In rural areas, the practice of holding a separate wedding evening continues. On the eve of the wedding night, the bride's hair is symbolically divided, although this can be difficult to do with modern short hairstyles [20].

Post-wedding rituals currently include visiting the bride's relatives and introducing the newlyweds to relatives of both parties, whose houses they visit with gifts [19].

The funeral rites of the Kalmyks have undergone significant changes over several centuries in connection with the historical processes taking place in society. As many researchers noted before 20–30. XX century the funeral rite of the Kalmyks was largely formed under the influence



of religious ideas, which over time, overlapping each other, were recorded in it [4, p. 98-110; 12, p. 9-16; 13, p. 115-121]. During the period of forced relocation to Siberia in the 40–50s of XX century the structure, and especially the semantics of this complex, were largely lost. Data from field materials indicate that during the deportation the Kalmyks, finding themselves in a foreign cultural environment without the opportunity to observe traditional funeral rites, were forced to adopt elements of the funeral rites of the peoples around them in exile. They began to bury me in a cemetery, in a wooden coffin, and put a fence on the grave. A memorial dinner appeared not only on the day of the funeral, but also on the 7th and 49th days [15].

In Soviet times, civil rituals were instilled, where an important place was occupied by a funeral meeting, at which relatives, colleagues, and friends spoke, which contradicted the traditional silence. It is impossible not to note the appearance of mourning bands, wreaths, and music. However, it is necessary to note the preservation of traditional elements – the orientation of the graves is west-east, the offering of food to the souls of the deceased, the ritual of "invoking happiness" buoy kelgn, interrupting the mutual attraction of the soul of the deceased and living relatives tachal [15].

Changes in the structure and semantics of funeral rituals were also influenced by the multiethnic environment. Currently, due to the increase in national self-awareness, there is a return to traditional rituals, including funeral and memorial rituals.

The cemetery as a cultural phenomenon in the life of the Kalmyk ethnos has been practically not studied. For Kalmyk nomads in the past, the presence of permanent cemeteries was not typical. With the beginning of the transition to sedentism, the Kalmyks began to have cemeteries, and we can talk about the emergence of a new ritual associated with this phenomenon. Since the beginning of the 20th century and to this day, burials are carried out in the ground, in a grave pit one meter wide, two meters long, and about two meters deep [15].

The practice of installing tombstones and fences arose, which went through a number of stages of development. The most common tombstones among Kalmyks are wooden tetrahedrons – bumba. The next type of graves – the Soviet period – has iron fences and iron tombstones topped with red stars or just an arrow (tip). The third type is the graves of the late 80s and early 90s of the XX century, they are distinguished by massive marble tombstones, inscriptions on the gravestone, flower beds, portraits (carved in marble or made on an iron base). Tombstones of the late 90s of the XX century. and the beginning of the 21st century. made in the "oriental style", with finials stylized as Buddhist pagodas or suburgans. Graves of relatives dating back to around the early 60s. XX century, are located compactly, several generations are buried on one side and, if possible, in a row. The graves of spouses are usually located nearby: the wife's grave is on the left and, as it were, at the feet of the spouse [15].

You can note the addition of rituals when visiting a cemetery. So, during funerals a year or more later, it is customary for close relatives to come to clean and put the graves in order. These actions are carried out in relation to the burials of all relatives, regardless of the degree of relationship. You should leave a few coins and the treats you brought with you on the graves.



Nothing can be taken from the cemetery; When leaving the cemetery, you must fumigate yourself with incense. Currently, burials are usually cleaned at Easter or during a family visit before the funeral service, which indicates an innovation adopted from the funeral rites of the Russian people. A new sign associated with this ritual is that the cemetery cannot be expanded, since this, according to the sign, can lead to the death of the remaining members of the clan or residents of the area (i.e., as if new places for graves are being prepared).

Conclusions.

Thus, the isolated and permanent residence of Kalmyks in the Lower Volga region in a foreign ethnic, religious and foreign language region, connected by a common origin, common history, customs and realizing themselves as a single whole since the 19th century, led to the formation of their ethnic identity. From the second half of the twentieth century. Kalmyks gradually lost some of their specific characteristics, which led to a change in ethnic identity. The processes of change in various aspects of ethnic culture represent the life of an ethnic group, the living process of its development and transformation. Analysis and recording of this data is the most important scientific task.

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