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Traditional Festive Culture of Tuva: Semantics and Transformation

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Abstract

In this paper, various approaches to the definition of concepts tradition, traditional culture, celebration and festive culture are explored via general scientific methods such as comparative-historical, problem-logical and systemic. As a result of the research conducted in order to determine the specificity and nature of traditional festive culture the conceptual and theoretical aspects are specified. Semiotic aspects of Tuvan holidays and folk games are revealed; the latter in the study are understood as a meaning, a means aimed at the complete reproduction, storage and transmission of the culture of the Tuvan ethnos, its semantic core.

Keywords: Tradition, Celebration, Culture, Festive Culture.

Cultura festiva tradicional de Tuva: Semántica y transformación

Resumen

En este artículo, se exploran varios enfoques de la definición de conceptos tradición, cultura tradicional, celebración y cultura festiva a través de métodos científicos generales como comparativo-históricos, problemático-lógico y sistémicos. Como resultado de la investigación realizada para determinar la especificidad y la naturaleza de la cultura festiva tradicional, se especifican los aspectos conceptuales y teóricos. Se revelan aspectos semióticos de las fiestas y juegos folclóricos de Tuvan; Los últimos en el estudio se entienden como un significado, un medio dirigido a la reproducción, almacenamiento y transmisión completos de la cultura de la etnia Tuvan, su núcleo semántico.

Palabras clave: Tradición, Celebración, Cultura, Cultura Festiva.

1. INTRODUCTION

The development of civilization in the beginning of the XXI century is characterized by complex and dialectically contradictory processes, the most important vector of which is globalization. The latter is inherent in such phenomena as cultural universalism, unification and Westernization. The other side of globalization is the desire for regionalization and localization of cultures. To identify the specificity of the culture of a particular people, it is necessary to pay attention to the regions that for centuries have created and carefully preserved original national traditions. In the Russian Federation one of

these territories is the Republic of Tuva (Tuva). Tuva is a unique region of Central Asia, distinguished by a variety of cultural traditions and provoking great interest among domestic and foreign researchers. Being the oldest population of the Asian steppes, the Tuvans have brought to our days a specific culture and outlook, in many respects archaic, as well as original traditions. The culture of the Tuvan people is characterized by a particularly pronounced national identity, a wide range of unique elements and forms, including festive culture (Aiyzhy and Mongush, 2016).

Festive culture of the Tuvans is rooted in the traditional sources which remain its core and the breeding ground for development. It is a phenomenon that is complex in content, morphology and dynamics, which reflects the way of life, traditions, religious cults, the most important dates of the Tuvan ethnos history, the modern all-Russian festive calendar (Aiyzhy & Mongush, 2016b; Aiyzhy & Mongush, 2016c; Dekanova, 2009). One of the main elements of traditional festive culture, helping to preserve the national and cultural identity of any people and develop a spiritual connection between the generations, is folk games. Natural conditions, features of the historical development of the Tuvan people gave its games a national identity and made them original, different from the games of other ethnic groups. However, till now the folk games played during Tuvan holidays and national celebrations - their history, development and transformation, semantics - remain little or insufficiently studied field of traditional culture.

Thus, the relevance of the work is related to the need to study traditional festive culture which is a part of the cultural core of the Tuvan people and contributes to the preservation of its national identity. The aim of the research is to reveal the specificity of the traditional festive culture of the Tuvan people as a special element of the cultural heritage that promotes the development of the national culture.

2. METHODOLOGY

The research used general scientific methods as: comparative-historical, problem-logical and systemic. The specifics of the research determined the application of such a method as typological one which made it possible to determine the features of traditional festive culture. On the basis of the historical and cultural method the temporal patterns of the development of folk games in traditional festive culture and the correlation of historical events with the cultural context are also revealed. The appeal to the structural and functional method made it possible to reveal the peculiarities of the Tuvan festive culture, as well as the structure of the folk game in the interconnection of its elements and functions. There was also used a descriptive method represented by such approaches as collection, processing and interpretation of the material, as well as a semantic method that reveals the features of the sign nature of folk games.

3. DATA, ANALYSIS, AND RESULTS

Identification of the essence of the concept of traditional festive culture leads to a comprehension of its basic definitions, because the meaning of this or that definition determines the process of culturological reflection. A significant number of works of great theoretical and practical importance is devoted to the issue of tradition and traditional culture (Arutyunov, 1989; Ikonnikova, 1987). It is noteworthy that most authors understand the generally accepted forms and ways of life activity, which differ in stability, repeatability and are transmitted from generation to generation, under the traditions.

From the culturological point of view traditional culture was considered by (Kostina, 2009). She defines the concept of traditional culture as a culture that reproduces such a subject of historical action as a collective personality. For a person of this type, the most characteristic feature is the identification of oneself with a social group, all the representatives of which are united by common cultural ties and mechanisms of life. In such societies, called traditional or pre-industrial, collectivist social ideas dominate, presupposing strict observance of traditional norms of behavior and excluding the possibility of individual freedom manifestation (Kostina, 2009).

A special place in traditional culture is a holiday and festive culture. To make a complete definition of the concept of a holiday is an extremely difficult task. In the scientific literature, there are a number of interpretations of this concept, but all of them, as a rule, reflect only

one or several aspects of the holiday. Analyzing various definitions of the concept of a holiday, we can note the characteristics that are somehow mentioned in the descriptions of the festive culture. The Big Explanatory Dictionary on Cultural Studies defines a holiday as a day or days of celebration, established in honor of or the memory of someone or something. A holiday is an antithesis to everyday life, ordinary life, a specifically short-lived form of human existence. Particular importance in the holiday is acquired by its aesthetic component: sensual-emotional richness of content, conciseness, expressiveness, alogism, entertainment, elements of carnival, and theatricalization. All these qualities relate the holiday with art, but they do not identify them. The holiday is like a border zone between real life and artwork (Kononenko, 2003).

From the above definitions of holiday it follows that the game features of the holiday are important since the concepts of holiday and game are synonymous, it is difficult to imagine a holiday outside the game character. Kulyashova (2007) considered the holiday as a way of preserving traditional culture. Holidays - the most ancient and constantly reproducible element of culture which in some periods of history can survive the decline, but cannot disappear altogether. He is called to organize and aesthetically arrange free time. Being one of the foundations of human life, the holiday appears as the spiritual firmament of every epoch, every people. As a phenomenon of culture, the holiday performs various functions: ideological, educational, socially-integrative, propaganda, enlightenment, recreational, etc. Celebratory events enable our socially disunited society to unite, to

feel their community with other people. With the help of the holiday, as Kulyashova notes, humanity preserves and supports values, uses and recreates traditions (Kulyashova, 2007).

A holiday, by its nature, is a multifunctional phenomenon. According to the Polish sociologist Zhigulsky (1985) every holiday is associated with a certain value which is a sacred object (sacrum) for the celebrating group; he divides holidays into secular and religious ones. He also identifies the emotional character in them: they are divided into joyful and sad. The functions of the holiday are intertwined and interrelated, so the selection of any one of them breaks the integrity of the holiday as a complex phenomenon and gives a fragmentary idea of the complex nature of this phenomenon (Zhigulsky, 1985). The analysis of the definitions of the concept of the holiday and its functions allowed us to come to the conclusion that the holiday is semantically connected with free, idle time, a rest period; with a religious cult and the most important dates in the history of the people and the state; with folk customs, rituals, rites; with the traditions of social movements, celebrations, demonstrations; with joy, fun, feasting, consumption and waste, folk games.

The definition of festive culture has many meanings and each researcher considers it in accordance with the purpose and tasks of his research. Among the great variety of definitions we adhere the one given by Dekanova (2009) according to which festive culture is a part of the spiritual culture of society and includes the totality of all types and forms of holidays and festive traditions, rituals and rites,

ceremonies and customs, attributes and symbols that reflect life and mores existing and acting in the society in concrete historical conditions with progressive historical development. As the researcher points out, over time the festive culture undergoes certain changes, both evolutionary and revolutionary. Some of its components, although experiencing the impact of socio-cultural transformation processes, are quite stable and even conservative, others have a greater focus on innovation and are more or less exposed to external and internal influences. Festive culture, which unites numerous festivals, rituals and rites, different in kind and type, in content and ideology, is one of the most vivid and original phenomena of national culture. The formation, existence and development of the festive culture are always long and complex processes in which political, socio-economic and cultural transformation processes that occur in one or another historical period and are influenced by numerous and diverse factors are reflected.

The conducted analysis of the concepts of traditional culture, holiday, festive culture allowed us to formulate our own understanding of the concept of traditional festive culture as a complex of holidays and festive traditions, rituals, customs, games, symbolic attributes reflecting the values, religious views, life and customs of representatives of a particular ethnos, providing broadcast of social experience and the interaction of a man, society, nature and culture. In the culture of the Tuvan people a special place is taken by the original, traditional holiday of Naadym which has a number of analogues in the name and composition of traditional games among other Turkic-Mongolian peoples.

In the culture of the Buryat people the polysemantic word *naadan* means: 1) play, fun, entertainment; 2) evening, party, dance (circle dance); 3) staging, performance, concert; 4) joke, mockery, fun; 5) hornbill (about birds). The corresponding modern Mongolian word *naadom* means: 1) celebration, 2) competition, 3) merrymaking, 4) national holiday (Dugarov, 1991). A cognate Tuvan word *naadym* also corresponds to the above mentioned values. The basis of the Tuvan traditional holiday of *Naadym* is three men's folk games: horse races – at *charyshtyrary*, archery with the belt - *bag adary* and archery with the target - *kara adary*, the national wrestling *Khuresh*² and also the ritual dance of the eagle performed by wrestlers. The number three is one of the sacred numbers among many nations. This number represents the ideal model of any dynamic process which implies the emergence (birth), development and decline (expiry, death). Everything in the world appears, is born, lives and develops, but there is nothing eternal on the Earth, as everything dies, grows old, everything falls into decay. The vertical model of the world is expressed in the traditional culture of the Tuvans by the number three: top, middle, bottom. Representations of the upper, middle and lower worlds, the past, present and future of the time, are universal concepts in mythology and later in folklore and the heroic epic of the Turkic-Mongolian peoples. There are a number of representations associated with the number three and the three main men's games among the Tuvans as well which symbolize them through signs and symbols. Three main dreams in the traditional overthrow of the people are to be always full, beautifully dressed and live your life with dignity.

In the recent past, triathlon, in addition to the entertainment function designed to collect people, carried in itself, above all, the cult content. In triathlon traditionally the first tour was the ritual struggle – national wrestling Khuresh, then horse races and, finally, archery. At the semantic level, these ritual games contributed to the formation of the military spirit of the man, his wrestling qualities, and the ability to overcome difficulties. Their main motto was: the struggle for life. If you do not persevere (like a maral), strive for the best, the highest (the Sun), fight to the death (like the Eagle), for your place in the upper world - in paradise, then destiny (= Arrow) will inevitably lead you to the lower world - in hell - the kingdom of the Bear (Kostina, 2009). At this point at the sign level, through the representatives of the animal world, the symbolism of the three worlds is confirmed: the maral - the middle world, the bear - the lower world, the eagle - the upper world. In folk tales, legends, the epos of the formation of a real man - a warrior - has always been promoted by struggle = overcoming difficulties, staying in three worlds = in the thirtieth kingdom.

Bows and arrows of nomadic people have long been related to military attributes, archery has changed over from the category of military art to sport and has been preserved as one of the important components of the modern Tuvan holiday Naadym. Before the beginning of the ritual game of kara adary, at a certain distance the skins of goats are suspended, and then they hit this target with an arrow. The best shooter is the one who hits the breast of the skin. There is another kind of this game. Here the target is a bun of wool. At a certain distance, the stump is placed on the stump so that when it is hit,

it rolls back. The winner is the one who scored the greatest number of hits.

No less popular part of the traditional holiday of Naadym were horse races - at charishtyrary. Perhaps it is in them that the national character of the Tuvans is most clearly expressed, for without a horse the life of a nomad cattleman is absolutely inconceivable. If, in order to become a wrestler or archer, it required a special talent and constant training, then the rider was virtually everyone, and the woman was not an exception to this. Horse racing is known in many nations. By their content Tuvan races are extremely close to the Mongolian, Buryat and Altai ones, but differ significantly from the Kazakh kunbure (the goat beating) which is held on Muslim holidays, as well as from the Kyrgyz kyaubyry and baigy (horse racing) and Georgian djirity. Despite the great popularity of such folk games as archery and horse racing, the center – the star attraction of Tuvan holiday Naadym is the ritual national wrestling khuresh which goes back to the depths of centuries by its roots.

The Tuva heroic epic abounds with episodes where the heroes, when meeting on the road, would certainly try strength and compete against each other. In the legend of Geser, when describing the meeting with Azhyy-Mergen Kadyr, it says: Let us not waste time. We will just try our strength. The opponent of Geser first puts him on his knees. Then Geser told him: ... I will try again. The two heroes had been seizing and fighting for one month - 30 days, then for two months - 60 days, then for three months - 90 days. And, finally, Geser, with the

nimbleness of a falcon, put his opponent on his back. In the legends it is also said about the dance of the eagle: when the heroes face each other, having agreed to fight, they perform a dance. About the hero they say: "He dances like an eagle, he is nimble like a falcon" (Mainy, 2013). Here, the slight hidden meaning of the sacred number three, increased to ten, and then to twenty and thirty times, passes through the text emphasizing the non-human strength of the hero.

Let us consider the semantics and basic functions of the Tuvan national wrestling *khuresh* and the ritual dance of the eagle associated with it – *devig*. Before the start of the fight, the spectators seated themselves in the form of a large circle, in one part judges were located, who mainly consisted of the number of former wrestlers-champions, in another part - wrestlers. Their number must necessarily be even, so that no one would stay without a partner. When the number of wrestlers reached 16 or 36, two seconds (witnesses) were assigned, when it was 66 wrestlers – four seconds, etc. The circle from ancient times has a symbolic significance in the traditional culture of a number of peoples. The disk of the Sun served as an example of the original circle, and everything else was built in this manner. The circle line is the only line that has neither a beginning nor an end. The center of the circle, where the wrestlers were located, is uniformly removed from all points and is a point of infinite rotation in space and time. Ritual struggle which is the center of the traditional men's games on the holiday of *Naadym* is an imitation, analog, play, at the kinetic level, of continuous rotation in space and time.

Before the beginning of the struggle and after its end, the most ancient traditional dance of the eagle associated with totemism– devig - was performed. The Mongols have ritual movements in this dance (swinging their hands, patting their thighs) which are associated with the flight of the mythical bird Garuda which is of a sunny nature. She was also revered by the Tuvans under the name of Khan-Khereti. In Hindu and Mongolian mythologies, in the works of the oral folklore of nomads, there is the image of the king of birds - Garuda. This is a variant of the oracular bird of Simiurg (among Farsi), the Firebird (among the Slavs), the prototype of all the eastern birds. It is a bird with a human torso, an eagle's head, a snake in its beak and powerful wings that can stop the rotation of the planets. Garuda is the image of a magician who can comprehend in an instant everything that happens in the world, understand and relate distant events. Thus, it can be stated that the symbolism of this male contest is associated with ritual worship of the Sun, and is a reflection of its essence: the firebird, the Sun-bird, the bird of the upper world.

According to the Tuvan researcher V. Darjaa, the eagle and the ritual wrestling Khuresh dedicated to the eagle symbolized paradise, as the struggle was the main condition for finding paradise: a place in paradise is reached in the fight (for life). The definition of paradise is given to understand what the keepers of traditional culture have invested in the designation of the place where the eagle carries away the body particles with the soul of the good man after the life on the earth. In the traditional sense it was something which can be designated as a parallel upper world (Ustuu Oran). The upper world

paradise was somewhere above, where, because of the proximity of the Sun, it is always warm, where the eagle carried away the souls of the dead with the body parts. The Eagle acted as a vehicle for the delivery of the soul to heaven. The Bear in the traditional sense – is the judge of hell, the Eagle – means of communication with paradise. Thus, the bear and the eagle for the keepers of traditional culture represented the opposition symbols which assessed the life of a person on earth. This was the social idea of the cult. Hence the prevailing belief among the nomads that a warrior who died in a battle with a weapon in his arms awaits a place in paradise, since the human remains of those fallen on the battlefields became prey for birds, only a small part of them were taken to predators, of which there were practically no bears. Therefore, in ancient times in the remote taiga, where bears live, battles involving large masses of people, as a rule, were not carried out.

Investigating the essence of folk games in festive culture, let us turn to the art studies: Before the competition begins, all wrestlers simultaneously perform the oldest dance of an eagle as if descended from rock carvings. Rock paintings, revealed in Central Asia, convey the process of gradual transformation of a man into a bird. The figures are given in a dynamic sequence and consist of three phases. It can be seen how a person gradually lengthens his arms, turning into large wings, and the first image of a person gradually passes into the final phase, where a huge bird is depicted. Magic drawings on the rocks in the representation of a man possessed mighty power. They were to promote successful hunting, abundant livestock and children, and the image of the sacred bird-totem - ancestor and patron-protected the

ancient community from misfortunes and troubles, from enemies and evil spirits. Ancient steppe people arranged prayer services and ritual games near colorful drawings on the rocks. Young men competed in nimbleness and strength, and the winner, imitating the movements of the sacred bird – the Eagle, jumped from foot to foot, high from the ground, and helping himself with his rounded hands - wings (Buksikova, 2009).

From century to century, from generation to generation, the national struggle among the Tuvans was enriched by ever newer elements, constantly transformed and finally acquired modern forms. At the same time, the traditional costume of wrestlers also changed. If originally it was a short robe with wide pants, then later it is already tight-fitting sports pants, tightened with a belt, and a short jacket with long sleeves, covering only the back of the wrestler, leaving his chest open. This is connected, in our opinion, with the legend that the militant Tuvan amazons (young ladies) often tried to try their strength against men, and an open wrestling suit was designed to prevent them from doing so. The war games of Kyrgyz women, in which they often defeated men, survived until the 19th century. Before going to the competition site, wrestlers clap their hands three times on the outer and inner sides of the thighs. These movements in the language of symbols mean that a man is strong with his three skills: archery, horse racing and wrestling (Mainy, 2013). On the great feast of the Three Games - in wrestling, horse racing and archery, each participant proved his masculine nature, showing it in competitions and seeking to earn public recognition and laudatory odes. The man is called to be not only

the owner of the yurt – og eezi, of cattle, the father of the family, the hunter and the craftsman. But in general - the master of life, the winner in the fight, in the fast horse races, as well as keen and accurate in everything. Thus, the ritual folk games of the Tuvan holiday Naadym revealed and socially elevated the male principle in men, their special vocation in the world.

Straightening their shoulders and backs, and stretching out their powerful hands to the sides, the wrestlers smoothly perform the dance of the eagle - they soar moving to the place of the fight. Having landed, they clap their thighs twice, which means the opponent's invitation to a struggle in the language of symbols: You or me. The dance of the eagle, performed before the fight, helps to remove stress and fills the body and spirit with solar energy, improves blood circulation, sets up for victory. By the quality of the performance of this ritual dance, spectators judge the readiness of a fighter for a struggle, because it reveals the plastic, coordination and spirit of the fighter. During the performance of the Eagle dance, the wrestler is accompanied by the second (*moge salykchyzy*), who encourages him, gives instructions and introduces him to the audience. After the struggle, the winner performs a ceremony of shaking dust from the defeated, helping him to rise. The losing wrestler unleashes a ritual *sodak* in recognition of his defeat (a short jacket with long sleeves covering the wrestler's back), passes under the winner's hand and returns to his place. Triumphant upturned hands - this is a special sign of victory in the competition. Performing the ritual dance of the eagle, the wrestler expresses his joy, demonstrates strength and thanks the rival and fans. As a sign of the

acquisition of grace (victory) from the supreme deity, the fighter simulated the magical flight of the mythical bird to the spirits of the upper world. The winner, in this solemn moment, identified himself with the deity (totem – a solar bird) conquering chaos (darkness, cold, etc.). The ritual dance of a wrestler *devig* imitates the flight of an eagle - a symbol of heavenly power, fire and immortality. He has various functions: performed before the fight - sets the wrestler to fight, after the struggle - calms his nervous system, gives an outlet for emotions. The winner's dance ends with one clap on the hips - victory is mine (Mainy, 2013).

A special relation to the cult of the eagle existed in religious mythological representations of Buryat shamanists. They believed that the Eagle was the son of the owner of the island of Olkhon who was called Khan-Khoto-Baabai - The Royal Father of Khoto (in Turkic-Yakut *homol hotoi* - the eagle). So, for example, the ethnic group of the Olkhon Buryats, who revered the bald eagle as their ancestor, called it *Eekhe Shubuun* - Majestic Bird. In addition, the totem features of the eagle were inherent in other ethnic groups of the Buryats. There are reports that the Buryats went to pray to the sacred cave of the Olkhon cliff - to the Great Host of Olkhon Island. There is an overlapping of the multi-staged beliefs. The veneration of the cave, the womb of the mother earth, is covered by the cult of the eagle, the ancestral bird, but the motivation remains unified, people would come here with the request to give offspring (wealth). A similar phenomenon was observed among the Yakuts: childless women asked for the soul of the child from the Eagle. Thus, a dance in honor of the eagle, the

reincarnation of a fighter into a sacred ancestor also symbolizes fertility: the bird - the Sun = the Sun - the giver of offspring, life.

Perhaps, therefore, this ancient ritual dance connected with the veneration of the sacred bird from a wide range of Turkic-Mongolian peoples has reached this day. The dance of the eagle is also an obligatory component of the traditional Tuvan Naadym holiday today. The study of this component of the Tuvan holiday culture made it possible to reveal a whole series of semantic parallels in the culture of the peoples of Central Asia. The men's folk games of the Tuvans, which today are the basic, obligatory component of the traditional festive culture, were formed during the long historical development of the ethnos. The folk game which reflects forgotten cults, different beliefs, rites, customs and rituals is a complex, multidimensional, polysemantic social phenomenon. Specific natural conditions, features of historical development give the national games of the Tuvans a national identity, reflect the unique features of the material and spiritual culture of the ethnos. Transformations and interpretations of ritual games of the traditional festive culture of Tuva can be seen in the stage productions of choreographers and directors of Tuva (Mainy, 2012). A well-known Tuvan ballet master Ayan Mandan-Khorluu repeatedly turned to the folk games of the Tuvinsians in his works. On their basis, he created a series of vivid and original dances that can really be called folk dances. This are Er kizhinin ush oyunu - Three male merrymaking (wrestling, archery, horse racing), Oitulaash (pebble kicking), Naadym – holiday of my homeland where there presented all the elements of the national festival of Naadym: dance of

kaigals Udaltsy (slashing fellows), wrestling khuresh Moge salykchylary, and the dance of a shaman. All the performances of the talented choreographer are distinguished by a deep knowledge of the folklore of the Tuvan people and an inexhaustible fantasy. Acting as a choreographer in the musical play A. Mandan-Khorluu very finely crafted choreographic drama, saturate it genuinely popular elements of plastics, unexpected discoveries and solutions.

The creation of the first national children's ballet Shyyaan am was carried out in 2011 as part of a cultural program dedicated to the 90th anniversary of the formation of the Tuvan People's Republic. The participants of the ballet were pupils of the Kyzyl choreographic school and the ensemble of classical dance Alantos, acting in the school mentioned above, as well as students of the choreographic department of the Kyzyl College of Arts named after A.B. Cyrgal-ool. Its name Shyyaan am should have already interested the viewer. This is the traditional formula - the magic words of the Tuvan narrators, which they constantly repeat throughout the story, and which signify the beginning and continuation of the narration. Folk tales and legends formed the basis for the libretto written by S. Mongush and R. Stal-ool. The ballet master of the play R. Stal-ool managed to penetrate deeply into the world of the child - the hero of this performance.

One of the most striking episodes in the ballet was the folk games of the Tuvans: archery, wrestling khuresh, horse racing. Choreographer could find in this episode specific vocabulary, interesting transitions. Here the ballet's main hero grows up, through

ritual games he passes into another status - a fighter for justice, freedom. In the children's national ballet *Shyyaan* an ancient sacred games became a symbol of overcoming physical and moral weakness by the hero, a symbol helping to reveal the spiritual world of man (Antufeva, 2011). Thus, folk games of traditional holidays enriched with the creative imagination of Tuvan choreographers and directors found their refraction not only in bright, original, deeply national dances, but also in different forms of folk-stage choreography: dance and vocal-choreographic suites, choreographic pictures, Tuvan children's ballets.

4. DISCUSSION

As a result of the research conducted in order to determine the specificity and nature of traditional festive culture the conceptual and theoretical aspects are specified. There was revealed the presence of semantic and notional links of the given concept with adjacent terms tradition, traditional culture, holiday, festive culture. In addition, on the basis of the historical and cultural analysis, the influence of ethnic and cultural ties of the Tuvan people with the neighboring peoples of Siberia and Central Asia on the formation of the structure of the national Tuvan games is explicated. Semiotic aspects of folk games are revealed; the latter in the study are understood as the meaning, means and results of specific spiritual and practical activities of the Tuvans aimed at the integral reproduction, storage and transmission of the culture of the Tuvan ethnos, its semantic core. The possibilities of

creative interpretations of folk games in various types of scenic choreography of Tuvans are shown as well: choreographic composition, dance suite, vocal-choreographic picture, ethno-ballet.

Recently, the number of regional theoretical studies have been increasing which determine the methodological approach to the development of the problem of studying folk games not only in Central Russia, but also in Siberia. For example, the problem of linking the game with various types of folk art has repeatedly become the subject of study by researchers, both historians, ethnologists and art historians.

In the context of the art criticism, the historical connection between the holiday and the game, as well as artistic creativity, can be traced. First of all, the game is considered by researchers as a part of the folk dance culture. The first scientifically described experiments on the use of folk games in a stage production belongs to the ethnographer M.Ya. Zhornitskaya. Applying field ethnographic materials on folk games and dances of the peoples inhabiting Yakutia, she created a number of bright choreographic works showing the way of life and customs of the peoples of the North, such as gathering and going out to hunt, skiing, trapping, searching for the beast, shooting, etc. In the monograph *Folk Dances of Yakutia* M.Ya. Zhornitskaya, describing a series of mobile games of the Yakuts which reveal analogies in kinetic construction with Buryat games, notes that they have dance elements and are often accompanied by a chorus. A ballet master, art critic, teacher and choreographer A.G. Lukina continues to develop the use of folk games by M.Ya. Zhornitskaya in combination with various

elements of traditional culture in the production of the choreographic work. Based on folk games and their elements, she created a number of interesting original choreographic works. So, in the dance for children, the director with great creative imagination used birch bark toys. Children depict the butting of bulls, cows, cattle, imitate the milking of cows. Boys compete in the goose step, bending down, trying to get the birch-bark toys with their teeth, standing on one leg. These ancient folk games come to life in a stage dance.

Among the modern original and interesting models of gaming space, one can name the concept in the research and publications of Buksikova (2009) who develops the problems of folk games in the choreographic art. In her works the author considers the history, the sign character and the transformation of the folk games of the peoples of Eastern Siberia through culturological discourse. The researcher focuses on folk games, which, being an integral part of the festive culture, have survived to this day thanks to the syncretic unity in their structure of elements of various types of art: dance, songs, mimic-plastic performances and theatricalization. To a greater extent, this factor concerns traditional games in which the organic element included actions with a pronounced dramatic and dancing character. Buksikova (2009) notes that the deep penetration into the game culture of the peoples of Eastern Siberia will help expand the framework of contemporary choreographic art, enrich the repertoire of amateur and professional groups and will become an inexhaustible source of inspiration for choreographers and directors.

5. CONCLUSION

The scientific value of the work lies in the fact that the study of traditional holidays and games is of great importance for understanding the problems of historical dynamics, preserving and developing a modern Tuvan culture and the role of the festive and gaming principle in it. The development on this basis of further studies of the cultural core of Tuvan culture will allow us to identify and clarify its adaptive capabilities. The results obtained in the course of the research not only can be used to preserve and translate the folk games of the Tuvan ethnos in the modern society, but will also contribute to the search for theoretical ways and to the practical revival and popularization of a number of types of national art. The authors of the article defined the concept of traditional festive culture as applied to a complex of holidays and festive traditions, rituals, customs, games, symbolic attributes reflecting the values, religious views, life and customs of representatives of a particular ethnos, providing the transmission of social experience and the interaction of a person, society, nature and culture.

Studying games in historical dynamics allows us to see archaic game culture behind the layers of extraneous feature which goes back to the early forms of traditional outlook and culture of Tuvan ethnos. Comparative analysis shows that ethnic and cultural contacts between Tuvans and neighboring peoples of Siberia and Central Asia (China, Mongolia, Russia, Buryatia) had a special impact on the formation and structure of folk games. The folk game is a cultural text containing the

key codes of the traditional festive culture of the Tuvan ethnos. It does not simply include individual signs and symbols and individual texts, but acts as an integral semiotic act. The game is a way of preserving national spiritual values, plays the role of ideal images-symbols that preserve traditional knowledge which constitute the combined historical experience of the Tuvans.

Currently, festive culture is reviving, specifically through the folk games which are actualized in the life of the Tuvan people, exerting a significant influence on the development and formation of national art, culture and sports. This, in particular, contributes to the development of national choreography by including or using in it the transformed and interpreted elements of folk games. Thus, the traditional festive culture of the Tuvans, which is the most important component of the spiritual culture of the people, is a cultural and historical phenomenon that is complex in content, morphology, semantics, functions and dynamics.

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