

## SAFEGUARDING ICH AND ENHANCING IDENTITY OF KAZAKHSTAN IN FOCUS OF CENTRAL ASIAN SACRAL CULTURAL SPACE

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**Abstract:** The special interest for safeguarding ICH and enhancing identity can represent traditional culture of the Kazakhs being in outethnic environment i.e. culture of Kazakh abroad diasporas and irredenta. As a rule, pressure of foreign environment sets in motion a mechanism of self-preservation, resulting in the separation of ethnic and cultural life and the preservation of ethnic characteristics. In this case, the foreground elements of intangible heritage (language, rituals, self-consciousness expressed in folklore and oral tradition, etc.) are leading a major part of this mechanism. Traditional intangible culture as one of the main sources of ethnic, national, formal history of any people, country and state shifted into the category of “outgoing”, the sphere of its function has been steadily declining from year to year. Globalization process and social reforms having positive moments of creating conditions for resuming dialogue between communities, at the same time posing a threat of deterioration, disappearance and destruction of the intangible cultural heritage, as the most unprotected part of the national historical memory.

**Keywords:** Intangible, Culture, Heritage, UNESCO, Safeguarding, Communities, Historical, Kazakhstan.

### INTRODUCTION

Searches, difficulties and achievements in the sphere of safeguarding intangible cultural heritage have important significance for formation of different forms and types identity. Traditional intangible culture as one of the main sources of ethnic, national, formal history of any people, country and state shifted into the category of “outgoing”, the sphere of its function has been steadily declining from year to year. Globalization process and social reforms having positive moments of creating conditions for resuming dialogue between communities, at the same time posing a threat of deterioration, disappearance and destruction of the intangible cultural heritage, as the most unprotected part of the national historical memory.

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Perceiving the role of intangible culture as the foundation of national identity, in 2011 Kazakhstan acceded to the International Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of 17 October 2003. “The concept on safeguarding and development of intangible cultural heritage in the Republic of Kazakhstan” was adopted, by the Resolution of the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan № 408 in April 29, 2013. One of the main tasks of the Concept is the preservation and revival of the intangible cultural heritage which is under extinction threat.

According to researches of UNESCO the amount of lost cultural memory of the XX century exceeds that in comparison with any secular segment of the history of mankind. Only during the last century, we have irrevocably lost 70% of the priceless heritage, due to the lack of fixing and collecting the material from bearers of traditional music, folklore, traditions, rituals, etc., which are no longer alive. If we turn to the Kazakh traditions and the art of music, samples of folklore and folk historiology such as zhyr, kui, terme, songs and other preserved in people's memory, transmitted orally up to the last century, as a legacy from father to son. In the century of technocracy and information dominance this method is almost eradicated. Meanwhile, in many cases, pages of history, ethnography and culture of the Kazakhs till the middle of the XIX can be restored only by oral historiology as the traditional method of transmitting information.

#### **SAFEGUARDING ICH AND ENHANCING IDENTITY: EXPERIENCE AND CONSTRUCTION (ON THE EXAMPLE OF KAZAKH DIASPORA AND IRREDENTA)**

A wide range of activities and real actions in the sphere of safeguarding ICH and enhancing the identity in Kazakhstan found great reflection in the Inventory booklet of ICH of the Republic of Kazakhstan published in Kazakh, Russian and English languages. Kazakhstani booklet on ICH was published by the initiative of the National Commission of the Republic of Kazakhstan for UNESCO and ISESCO and National Committee on Safeguarding ICH attached to the information-net centre for intangible cultural heritage in the Asian-Pacific Region under aegis of UNESCO (ICHCAP). As the General Director Mr. Hyu Qwung noted: “This publication as considerable importance for representation of Kazakh living heritage, which is considered spirit and pride of the nation” [1].

This fact appeals an attention. There is a surprising phenomenon in diasporology connected with that the knowledge, ideas, whole historical and cultural memory of the information on the identity of a nation in the most original form is preserved among the Diaspora. Diasporas tend to be closer to the values of original identity, rather than their compatriots in their historic homeland. Unfortunately, this phenomenon is still not fully investigated. The author of these lines had the opportunity to observe the demonstration of the named phenomenon in the late

80's - early 90-ies of the XX century, while attending a scientific conference and field studies in Omsk and the Omsk region (Russian Federation). The presence of special ability of safeguarding so-called intangible, in fact spiritual heritage not only among Kazakh environment, but among other diasporas was pointed by the researchers N.A. Tomilov, K.N. Baltabaeva, N.N. Ablazhey [2] and others.

From the mentioned above the special interest for safeguarding ICH and enhancing identity can represent traditional culture of the Kazakhs being in outethnic environment i.e. culture of Kazakh abroad diasporas and irredenta. As a rule, pressure of foreign environment sets in motion a mechanism of self-preservation, resulting in the separation of ethnic and cultural life and the preservation of ethnic characteristics. In this case, the foreground elements of intangible heritage (language, rituals, self-consciousness expressed in folklore and oral tradition, etc.) are leading a major part of this mechanism. This is confirmed by preserved intact samples of the musical heritage and skills of arts and crafts in the areas of modern compact residence of the Kazakhs in Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Mongolia and China. For example, almost disappeared on the territory of Kazakhstan the art of playing sybyzgy preserved in its original form among the Kazakhs of Mongolia and China. Kazakhs in Uzbekistan, Karakalpakstan and Turkmenistan have samples of makam-saz, zhyr and kyi unknown to us. According to various sources, particularly given by the World Association of Kazakhs there are about 6.5 million representatives of Kazakh Diaspora live outside Kazakhstan. Like their compatriots, they are subject to the processes of urbanization, especially the younger generation. We should lose no time to assemble and revive heritage scattering on the world which was given to us as the age-old traditional art of ancestors and return it to the people.

Speaking on May 25, 2011, at the IV World Kurultai of Kazakhs the President Nursultan Nazarbayev put the task of carrying out scientific expeditions to the Kazakh diasporas in foreign countries before the Ministry of Culture and Information and the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan. The study, fixing all the surviving elements of the intangible culture of the Kazakh diasporas and irredenta in abroad and little-known group of Kazakh repatriates (oralmans), as an integral part of the national historical cultural memory, is one of the urgent problems of national importance.

In recent years, the great importance is given for oral history as a source and methods of historical research in the global social sciences and humanities. In the considering problem the objective of ratio of safeguarding ICH and enhancing the identity will be not only the assembly and fixing elements of intangible cultural of diasporas and irredenta of Kazakhs, and to present them as a unique source of historical and cultural memory. In the context of implemented two state programs - "Cultural Heritage" (2004-2011) and "The people in the flow of history" (2013-

2016) in Kazakhstan performed the task to organize the collection, systematization and classification of existing overseas and within the country materials for the history, culture and ethnography of the Kazakhs and Kazakhstan [3: 533-557]. Materials of the expeditions and based on them documentaries, photo albums, photo exhibitions have made a significant contribution to the implementation of policy to strengthen national identity.

Problems of safeguarding and enhancing identity of intangible cultural heritage of Kazakhs in abroad, particularly in Central Asia demand solving the following range of tasks:

- complex scientific and cultural reconstruction of forced migration route of Kazakhs from Kazakhstan (mainly border areas of Semirechiye, Eastern Kazakhstan, Mangystau region), begun in the first half of the XX century;
- study of intangible cultural heritage as the ground for safeguarding of their national identity on all its distance having space and time characteristics;
- inscription of identified elements into National Register of monuments of intangible cultural heritage;
- collection and fixing of materials as elements of ICH in accordance with demands and provisions of International Convention on safeguarding intangible cultural heritage of 2003.

Route Reconstruction should be done in theory, in the form of generalizations and rethinking of existing knowledge and in practice, by their passage, collecting and fixing the current state of the intangible cultural heritage in various aspects (e.g., hospitality, festivals and celebrations, etiquette, gift exchange, holy places, crafts and masters etc.). In conclusion the “travel” in time and sacred space of Central Asia will be the creation of photo albums series, educational films and photo movies (pictures, combined into a single series with the included video and audio) that will look through the prism of modernity to the traditional intangible cultural heritage of the Kazakhs of Central Asia. It will also be possible to study the process of mutual influence of the brought and local cultures on the example of borrowing elements of intangible culture of each other.

The proposed construct on enhancing the Kazakh identity is not limited to the above information and expected results. Carried out study will be necessary to relate to that what is in fact on the present territory of Kazakhstan. Collected informative layer and materials will be designed to create a comparative basis, a kind of indicator for the assessment of the quality of work done in the field of safeguarding intangible cultural heritage and enhancing identity in modern Kazakhstan. Moreover, it will create opportunities for correction and enrichment of elements from the National Registry of ICH.

## **OBJECTIVE GROUNDS AND FACTORS OF IDENTITY OF ICH IN CENTRAL ASIA**

Claimed theme could not be fully disclosed beyond the theoretical and practical material, which is related to the problems of safeguarding intangible cultural heritage and enhancing the identity in the focus of the Central Asian sacral cultural space.

The concept of post-Soviet Central Asia (Middle Asia, which includes Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and Kazakhstan separately) as the five well-defined political units only makes sense at the moment, covering the history of the modern period. Meanwhile, all the previous annals of the region positioned the above mentioned countries, where the space is constantly changing, as mobile dismember or expanding centers of gravity depending on the unfolding events in the region. Despite branching language dialects, separation of pastoral and agricultural people, supra-ethnic frontier of Central Asia, flowing through the Amu Darya River line, since the time of the spread of Islam symbolically separates it from the world of classical East. If you climb higher on the political map of the region, is gradually transformed into a zone of steppes, then here Central Asia also had a distinct boundary too, defined it as a buffer zone between Russia and China. Different ethnic groups were able to form are mixed and interdependent conglomerate professing single Turkic-Persian Islamic culture. It is no coincidence that two routes of the Silk Road ran in this region, along which went negotiators and missionaries, is mentioned by Ptolemy. And Rene Grousset considered this land as a matrix of nations, *vagina gentium* and called it along with the steppes of Orkhon, Kerulen and South Mongolia “Asian Germany” [4: 19].

“Firdaus al-Iqbal” of Muniz and Agakhi, a historical source of XIX century, narrating the history of Khorezm, which extended its influence up to the Kazakh steppe, listed a number of Khorezmshahs names of different tribes whose origin became as an evidence for the close relationship of the political elites of the time [5]. It is no coincidence that Academician V.V. Barthold called the fact of destruction of Khorezm by the Soviets as a political unit “alien to the local historical traditions” and “a complete contradiction to this tradition” [6].

The main factor in determining the grounds for the identity of the people of Central Asia is the long historical and cultural links. They were strengthened in the process of evolution of the forms of economic activity, the folding of the material and spiritual culture of the people of the region. Countries, states, nations and socio-cultural community of Central Asia are connected by geographic and ethnic proximity. “Their historical destiny, culture and religion were common for centuries. The fact that for many centuries they were in a state of intense interaction, lived side by side, they had a common history, economic, historical and social contacts affected to this similarity. A powerful factor is the proximity of the language. Finally, the similarity of national customs and traditions. At their extraordinary richness and

diversity, the people of Central Asia have a lot of similarity in national traditions, which reflected in world perception, the concept of peace inherent in people. Rites, customs and beliefs, in particular, the remnants of animism, shamanism, traditional archaic views were reflected in the rituals dedicated to the birth, marriage, death and other important events of human life “[7].

Convergence and identity of Central-Asian people are caused, to our mind, by imperatives of the history and culture as in its retrospective shape so by the perspectives to the future despite the diversity of past and is now developing centrifugal subjects and the difference of gravities poles. The process of mutual influence of people and cultures has never ended here on the basis of the people's organics. The XXI century was a time of competition of identities or cultural and civilization platform in the history of mankind. That is why it is important to constantly refer to the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage and enhancing identity. Events and real actions in these areas are important and relevant, the United Nations, and UNESCO as its division, tracking the course of events of the last decades, challenges international community to assist in the establishment of “borders with a human face” in Central Asia. [8]

### **DEFINITION AND CONTENT OF TERM “CULTURAL SACRAL SPACE”**

It is well known that the word “sacred” is derived from the Latin “sacralis”, which means “holy.” The root *sac*, obviously, goes back to praindoeuropean *sac*, the probable mean of which - “to protect, to defend.” The original semantics of the word “sacral” refers to the separation and security. “The religious consciousness eventually deepened understanding of the term, making a shade focus to the separation. That is sacred - it’s not just separated (from the world, as opposed to profane), and separated by a special purpose as intended to a special senior mission or use in connection with religious practices ... If we are talking about God, the word “sacred” - a definition otherness of the Most High, his transcendence towards the world. Accordingly, as associated with this transcendence, all dedicated to the subject of God endowed with the quality of holy, that is, sacredness “[9].

Noteworthy is the fact that with respect to the ancient history of the Kazakhs and a number of people, not only in Central Asia but also in Eurasia, the word “sac” is used in relation to tribal union of the early Iron Age. The Indian calendar is also has the word “sac” - “Saca” in its basis. There is no single explanation for the term “sac” until now. One thing is clear - it is no coincidence that it makes the basis of the concept “sacral.” By its cultural and historical essence this concept can be extended to a wide geographical region and stretched in time ethnic habitats. Therefore, in a hypothetical sense, we can say that the “sacredness” contains in its core motive and incentive for the union, the common defense and independent existence.

The definition of “cultural sacred space” internally and externally demonstrates itself as a kind of unifying beginning based on the primacy of culture and spirituality. Stimulating source of formation of such space was community of spatial representations, economic ties and ideological values. Cultural and sacred space could be isolated up to a certain historical time.

Cultural space objectively involves entering into it various forms and types of culture. This scheme is applicable in relation to the concept “sacred space.” “Under the space in this case can mean two things - concrete building and a sacred place, not necessarily associated with buildings. An example of the latter may serve as sacred groves, which were very popular in the old days of pagan dominion. Today many mountains, hills, meadows, ponds and other natural objects have sacred significance. Often this kind of space is designated by special signs - flags, ribbons, images and other elements of religious decor. Their importance is due to some miraculous event, for example, the phenomenon of the saint. Or, as it is very common in shamanism and Buddhism, the worship places associated with the worship of invisible beings living there, as spirits, etc. Another example of sacred space is a temple. Here, the determining factor for the sanctity often becomes not the sanctity of the place itself, but the ritual nature of the structure itself. Depending on the religion, the temple features may differ slightly. For example, somewhere it is fully deity house, which is not intended for people’s visits to worship. In this case, retribution honors is made the outside in front of the temple. Such situation was inherent, for example, in the ancient Greek religion. At the other pole are Islamic mosques and Protestant prayer houses, which represented specialized rooms for religious meetings and are intended more for a man than to God. In contrast to the first type, where the sanctity is inherent to space temple by itself, there is the fact of the religious use converts any space, even the most ordinary into a sacred place”. [10].

Historically cultural sacral space was a complex of singular models of cultures which was characterized by a special organizational scheme. So when we use this definition in association with certain region, particularly to Central Asia it is necessary to pay attention to specific of construction and function of that or another scheme of organization of cultural sacral space. The importance of such approach connected with sanctification of the ole and contribution of different ethnic cultures and communities into development of sacral space. Without this it is impossible to understand, object and disclose the content of sacral cultural space in regional and international frame.

### **COMPONENTS OF CENTRAL-ASIAN SACRAL CULTURAL SPACE**

Outlook to Kazakhstani forms and methods of safeguarding ICH and enhancing identity in focus of Central-Asian sacral cultural space shows that our country has practically all spheres mentioned in point 2 of Article 2 of International convention on safeguarding ICH of 2003:

- (a) oral tradition and forms of expression including the language as bearer of ICH;
- (b) performing art;
- (c) customs, rituals, celebrations;
- (d) knowledge and customs referring to nature and universal;
- (e) knowledge and skills connected with traditional crafts.

Peculiarity of presence of certain elements of ICH is that a number of which directly identical to, contact or overlaps with similar elements from different regions of Central Asia. It is important to note that the sacredness becomes more important. And this is not a formal existence of these elements as a component of the Central Asian sacral cultural space. There is a deep inner connection, which traces its roots back to centuries and millennia. And this relationship can be detected only by specialists from a particular sphere of knowledge, community members, some insiders.

Noteworthy is the relatively recent normal fact of modern life in Kazakhstan. United States Ambassador to the Republic of Kazakhstan, George Kroll, being on the west of the country, visited the shrines of Kazakhstan - Becket-Ata and Shopan-ata mosques in Oglandy. Underground mosques of Becket-Ata and Shopan Ata considered as shrines of Mangistau region. These places attract pilgrims all year round. It is believed that the mere mention of the name Becket-Ata in the conversation is able to take a trouble, and prayer in the mosque is able to perform a miracle. [12] You can be almost completely sure that the information and experience obtained by Mr. Ambassador limited boundaries of information about the uniqueness of seen places.

However, to get the full spiritual experience and knowledge, it is important to feel the inner connection of times and regions. Named artifacts are only material reflection of the unknown and unexplored fully spiritual layer of information. Certainly, part of it lies on the surface in the form of legends, fairy tales, interesting stories. The main part of which related to the knowledge of the communication history of the emergence of mosques Becket-ata and Shopan ata, covers a whole geographical area from the northern parts of South Asia to the gray mountains of the Caucasus. Therefore, when the speech is about regional breaking of safeguarding ICH and the more, the search for ways to enhancing the identity, it needs spectral and syncretic vision of objects of cultural heritage. Probably, we should agree with those who speak of the primacy of the spiritual, intangible foundations for appearance of the artifacts of material world. After all, there are monuments and artifacts of material heritage that we can contemplate, touch, describe in words, without revealing their authentic contents. In these moments you begin to understand the powerlessness before unsolved arsenal of the spiritual content of the various types and forms of cultural heritage, hidden from the eyes and hands.



The above said is directly related to the Kazakh and all components of the Central Asian cultural sacred space. Even in a situation, it would seem, a comprehensive description of an element of ICH, and the interpretation of its unique properties can either detect or miss the string due to the common heritage of mankind. Therefore, discussions and attempts of privatization of ICH elements on the part of communities and individuals, countries and in some situations may be regarded as a sign of the imperfection of the existing types of cultural sacred spaces.

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