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GLOBALIZATION AND ARTISTIC CULTURE IN KABARDINO-BALKARIA

Abstract

The author analyzes the trends in literature and fine arts of Kabardino-Balkaria, the writers and artists of which address the republic's past and folklore traditions; they bring together Western and Eastern traditions while following the worldwide art

trends and taking an active part in artistic projects in other countries. She does not look at globalization as an inevitable evil that destroys ethnic specifics and artistic meaning, but argues that it creates a new cultural milieu friendly to local and global trends.

KEYWORDS: *Fine arts, literature, ethnocultural identity, globalization, Kabardino-Balkaria.*

Introduction

Today, it has become especially important to concentrate not only on the socio-normative and everyday transformations of society, but also on the processes going on in artistic culture, an important sphere of spiritual activities of any ethnicity. Cultural transnationalization, as one of the basic descriptions of cultural globalization and an economic, as well as cultural-civilizational phenomenon, is one of the globalization products. By transnationalization I mean the process of adding new axiological meanings to national cultures; the emergence of a new type of transnational culture with unified, mobile, and commercialized features; the expansion of the information and communication space of national cultures (media-spaces and virtualization of cultural milieu); the intensification of international cultural exchange and drawing into it individual national regions (their state, public, and private structures); the widening scope of activities of transnational systems of education and science; and the creation of a new level of individualized culture and new types of identities in the globalized world.¹ These changes are obvious in all spheres of human activity: social, economic, and cultural.

Globalization creates new transnational borders between the new global communities, the variety and diversity of which are no longer rooted in national identity. This is much more obvious in the

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¹ See: O.N. Astafyeva, "Transnatsionalizatsia kulturnogo prostranstva: gosudarstvo i problemy koordinatsii kommunikativnykh strategiy," in: *Chelovek, kultura i obshchestvo v kontekste globalizatsii*, International Scientific Conference Papers, Moscow, 2007, pp. 7-11.

sphere of culture and is described by a recent coinage—glocalization—applied to products and services equally geared at local interests and global trends.

Communication and convergence are the most important functions of artistic culture, which determine its place and importance in society. The phenomenon of artistic culture is interesting from the point of view of its ethnonational and specific historical manifestations, as well as from the perspective of an analysis of global cultural interactions and mutual influences.

Globalization and Fine Arts in Kabardino-Balkaria

Mobility and commercialization are the two most pronounced trends in the republic's fine arts. There were several reasons for these developments, the most important of them being a group of highly professional painters who lived and worked under Soviet power within the pinching limits of socialist realism and had no chance of being involved in foreign commercial projects.

At the turn of the 21st century, the republic's painters became inevitable participants of art exhibitions in foreign countries; some of them went abroad to live by their art (today Kh. Teppeev and A. Kuliev work in Turkey; A. Pasht-Khan in Germany; Kh. Savkuev in Spain; Kh. Atabieva and A. Zanibekov in Italy; R. Tsrinov in the U.K.; M. Kishev divides his time between Spain and Britain, while A. Kolkutin travels between Belgium and Denmark). Commercialization did not affect the quality of their artistic endeavors since presence in the world artistic market presupposes competitiveness.

In the mid-1990s, exhibition activity in the republic was stirred up; the public was given the opportunity to enjoy works by world famous artists. In 1996, the National Museum of Kabardino-Balkaria exhibited paintings, graphic works, and watercolors of world famous vanguard artist Mikhail Shemyakin, including his *Carnivals of St. Petersburg*, *Angels of Death*, and *Metaphysical Images* series. In March 2006, the same museum exhibited his project *Sphere in Art* (photos and copies of objects of art spanning the period between the Middle Ages and our days); in October 2008, the National Museum of Kabardino-Balkaria opened an exhibition of his graphic works called "Dzen."

The privately owned Saralp Gallery contributes to the propaganda of national art: in September 2007, it organized the personal exhibition of prominent Adighe jeweler Asya Eutykh in the Hermitage in St. Petersburg. The gallery offers the republic's lovers of art a glimpse of artistic life abroad: in 2002-2005, it, together with the London Contemporary Art company and the Caucasian Bank for Reconstruction and Development, organized in Nalchik exhibitions of British artists; Akhmed Özal from Turkey, Mersad Berber, a Bosnian artist, and several others. In 2012, A. Saralпов opened an Art Center in Nalchik to exhibit paintings of the republic's artists, as well as of painters from other Russian regions and foreign countries.

In 2007, Balkar Azamat Kuliev, who lives and works in Turkey, exhibited his works in the Museum of Fine Arts in Nalchik and organized exhibitions of Austrian photo collage makers. Kuliev, who graduated from the Repin St. Petersburg State Academic Institute of Painting, Sculpture and Architecture in 1996, combines the West European and Oriental (Muslim) artistic traditions. He has always strived to bring together diverse cultural traditions and grasp their deeply-rooted axiology. Thanks to Oriental meditation and philosophical deliberations, the artist achieves psychologically exact and emotionally touching portraits, which are better described as allegories than anything else (*An Old Man, a Tree and a Bird, Old Age*, and a series of female portraits).

Many of the republic's painters strive to grasp and comprehend the artistic traditions of the past; they prefer complex metaphorical compositions to bring together Western and Eastern traditions and adjust them to their own cultural insights. This is the gist of the creative endeavors of B. Gudanaev, R. Turaev, Kh. Savkuev, K. Akkizov, Kh. Teppeev, Kh. Atabieva, M. Kishev, Yu. Chechenov, R. Shameev, R. Tsrinov, and others.

The artistic quest of Ruslan Tsrinov led him to transformations of specific images into multi-sided metaphors of a nationally-colored perception of the world, hence his highly decorative colors, ornamentally arranged compositions, and an obvious bias toward symbols—the typical features of so-called Receptualism, a newcomer to the republic's scene. In November 2007, the National Museum organized three exhibitions (R. Tsrinov, E. Mazloev, and sculptor A. Guchapshev) of Receptualist art.

Ruslan Tsrinov relied on Kazimir Malevich's *Black Square* to explain his vision of space and time by contrasts between black and white. The *Squares* by Tsrinov are filled with the energy and dynamism of the 21st century; they are better described as design than artistic efforts; his structural and graphic quest, to which the painter adds colors, cannot but stir up a lot of interest. In his work about Tsrinov, prominent art critic Slava Lohn (Vladislav Epishin) has written: "It is easy to imagine the principle of playing with cultural codes and the principle of inter-text, closely related to it, in the postmodernist or, rather, Receptualist creative work of TS (Ruslan Tsrinov.—G.B.). By combining the primitivist and civilized, Western and Eastern, pagan, Muslim and Orthodox, classical and modernist, modernist and post-modernist cultural codes in his artistic space, the artist, who employs laconic signs (which remained out of reach until Receptualism came to the fore), achieves rich forms and rich content in his paintings."²

The artistic interpretations of M. Gorlov, Kh. Savkuev, A. Kolkutin, R. Turaev, and V. Marchenko, who are engaged in a quest for a new artistic language, stir up the imagination. In 2004, the republic's Museum of Fine Arts organized a personal exhibition of Mikhail Gorlov's paintings and graphic works. His graphic series *The Adighe Suite* (1992) and *Kabardin and Balkar Folk Songs* (1993) present the mythopoetic world of the republic's autochthonous peoples in its natural milieu of diverse artistic symbolism. He perceives any ethnocultural tradition as part of the world cultural space. In 2006, Moscow's Khodynka Exhibition Center presented his *Texts* exhibition in which he tried to blend several arts: graphics, poetry, and jazz, in particular. Mikhail Gorlov's quest for novelty does not stop at the level of style (his style is pretty eclectic); he goes deeper into his attitude toward style in an effort to perceive any range of varied phenomena as a fact of art. In his graphic series called *Signs*, created under the influence of film director Andrey Tarkovskiy and his creative innovations, the artist tried to comprehend the levels of Christian conscience. Each of the sheets fixes stages of the appearance and development of Christian Orthodoxy in Russia. I. Terekhov has deemed it necessary to point out that Gorlov's multisided creative work is marked by "a never-ending quest for his 'genetic code' in the continuum of signs."³

On the whole, the republic's artistic context is brimming with styles and quests for new imagery in Receptualism (R. Tsrinov, E. Mazloev, and sculptor A. Guchapshev); photo-realism (V. Marchenko), abstractionism (M. Kishev), symbolism (Kh. Savkuev), etc. The powerful global information flows and artistic space filled with diverse axiological meanings add urgency to the problem of choice of artistic means based on free personal reflection rather than on ideology (as in the past). Art as "artistic self-awareness and a cultural code" (M. Kagan) creates a new type of ethnocultural identity that does not reject, but partially transforms and synthesizes the traditional and contemporary principles of self-identity.

Globalization and Belles Lettres

While globalization has affected the fine arts at the level of forms and meanings, in literature it manifests itself at the level of language, when new imagery structures emerge in literary works written in different countries.

² S. Lohn, *TS: Retseptualny serial v kontekste postmodernizma*, Nalchik, 2005, p. 49.

³ I.N. Terekhov, *Vozvrashchenie s kholmov*, Nalchik, 2008, p. 58.

Kabardino-Balkaria is no exception: globalization has started stylistic, structural, and axiological-normative shifts in its literature and has practically eliminated the borders between different types of culture. While before the globalization era, the East-West confrontation looked “transparent” enough, today the borders between them are disappearing despite the different, or even conflicting, understanding of man’s role and place in the environment. Under the impact of global electronic communication, the problem of identity is born anew: virtualization of cultural space leads to “reprogramming” of cultural principles. The new artistic code in contemporary literature stirred up a veritable information storm; it stimulated the formation of different stylistic trends of postmodernity. This is especially obvious in the Russian-language prose and poetry by B. Chipchikov, K. Elevterov, V. Mamsheev, A. Balkarov, M. Khakuashev, A. Makoev, and others.

The chaos of feelings and gaps of logic in the works of Balkar writer Boris Chipchikov are not shortcomings, but rather indisputable advantages. In his short story “Bella,” he looks at the fate of the generation born in exile, for whom the word Caucasus was nothing but a strange and cold term. Memories start with an open train carriage where the past and present meet as one. Anticipation of coming home, cozy times reading books, and “monotonous orange-colored Asia” (the place of deportation.—*Ed.*) were part of the past. While the Caucasus greeted those returning with “ragged patches of fog,” “fallen leaves,” and “cliffs all around.” But books, “cozy islands amid endless foul weather,” continued to “bloom.”⁴ The author places himself in the middle of the carriage—another link in the chain of geographic, historical and literary interconnections: Central Asia and the Caucasus, real and imaginary heroes.

Our study of the scope of literary inter-text issues in the context of globalization brings us to the problem of a dialog of cultures. In 2005, Prof. Igor Shaytanov published an extremely interesting article about the triad of contemporary comparative philology in the *Voprosy literatury* (Problems of Literature) journal.⁵ The dialog of cultures, in turn, bares the problem of identity at all levels—linguistic, confessional, national, and historical—which means that an integral and harmonious ethnic image resistant to globalization, standardization, and uniformity has become the most typical feature of the contemporary literary process. A bias toward ethnic differentiation is a response of the immunity system to homogeneity. At the turn of the 1990s, the republic’s authors tried to overcome the one-sided vision of history typical of Soviet times by plunging into subjects never touched upon in Soviet literature—makhajirs (Adighe literature) and deportation (Balkar literature)—in an effort to revive the historical memory of the peoples (*Korni* by A. Keshokov, *Most Sirat* by A. Teppeev, *Gybyz dostoynye* by S. Mafedzev, *Goluboy Tipchak* by Z. Tolgurov, etc.) and keep their ethnic roots intact.

The multidimensional nature of the contemporary cultural space is responsible for its complex, heterogeneous, and even contradictory trends, which dim the perspective. The greater role of the media in the global space pushed literature onto the back burner. To preserve and develop professional literature, the authors should take part in international contests and festivals; cultural diversity and innovations should be supported both financially and organizationally; beginners and well-known writers alike need financial and organizational support to see their works published, while the reading audience can be expanded through meetings with writers, etc.

Today, artistic culture as a whole is developing within the synthesis of genres and integration of graphic and expressive means, which makes popularization of national literature and fine arts in the media fairly promising. This explains why plays and performances based on traditional subjects and using national rhythms, music, customs, and rites are highly popular. The same can be said about events dedicated to outstanding Kabardin and Balkar cultural figures: folklore and ethnographic festivals, days of national cultures, folk shows, evenings of music and poetry, literary-musical productions, etc.

⁴ B.M. Chipchikov, *Vozvrashchaysia svobodnym*, Nalchik, 1998, p. 95.

⁵ See: I. Shaytanov, “Triada sovremennoy komparativistiki: globalizatsia-intertext-dialog kultur,” *Voprosy literatury*, No. 6, 2005.

Recent artistic practices have demonstrated that interaction among different arts and literary genres is highly varied and should not only be reduced to translating or re-coding works of art into the language of any other art. Today, the artistic quest breeds a desire to broaden the graphic and expressive scope of types of creative work by enriching them with the artistic potential of other arts.

Conclusion

The contradictory trends in artistic culture—quest for national identity and preservation of ethnicity, on the one hand, and spreading beyond the limits of subjective national world perception, on the other, are mutually determined and interconnected sides of a single artistic process. Globalization does not necessarily mean the leveling out of literary, artistic, cultural, and philosophical meanings.

Globalization not only erodes, but also extends ethnocultural borders. Today, socio-cultural transformations are helping to create original cultural blends; this is leading to changes in content and axiology and creating a new type of ethnocultural identity.
