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THE ROLE OF FESTIVALS IN PROMOTING AND PRESERVING CULTURAL IDENTITY

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Abstract: This article provides a scientific and theoretical analysis of the role of festivals in preserving and promoting folk culture and national identity. Festivals are viewed not only as mass cultural and entertainment events but also as important socio-cultural events that reflect the historical memory, customs, language, religious views, and aesthetic values of the people. The article also highlights the importance of traditional and modern festivals in fostering cultural awareness, national pride, and a sense of historical belonging among the younger generation. In the context of globalization, the socio-cultural possibilities of festivals are revealed in preserving national values, ensuring the continuity of cultural heritage, and forming a stable spiritual environment in relation to external cultural influences.

Keywords: cultural identity, national identity, festival, tradition, historical memory, aesthetic value, cultural heritage, globalization, youth upbringing, folklore.

In today's context of globalization, the preservation of national culture, historical memory, and traditional values is becoming one of the crucial factors determining the spiritual development of every nation. At a time when the interaction of different cultures is intensifying, the widespread promotion of the people's unique customs, rituals, art, folklore and traditional way of life is of particular importance in strengthening national identity. In this process, festivals emerge as an effective means of demonstrating cultural heritage, ensuring spiritual connection between generations, and popularizing national values in modern forms.

The uniqueness of each nation is embodied in its cultural identity, which is combined with historical memory, traditions, linguistic richness, and art forms. Holidays and festivals, which have been formed over centuries and passed down from generation to generation, are among the important socio-cultural phenomena reflecting this cultural identity. Holidays not only express the joy and unity of the people but also play an invaluable role in realizing their national identity, respecting historical roots, valuing values, and educating the younger generation in this spirit [1.113-114]. In an era of intensifying globalization processes, there is a risk of national cultures merging. Under the influence of various forms of mass culture, technological development, and Western trends, some national values are at risk of disappearing. In such conditions, festivals allow not only to preserve cultural heritage but also to reinterpret it in modern conditions. They revive the centuries-old traditions, language and artistic manifestations, religious and aesthetic concepts of peoples through collective consciousness, harmonizing them with modernity.

From this perspective, holidays and festivals serve as a socio-cultural platform for the formation and stabilization of cultural identity. Through them, people realize their national identity, feel their belonging to a specific culture, and thus strengthen social cohesion. This article aims to reveal the essence of these processes, analyze their commonalities and differences, study the festival traditions of various peoples, and substantiate the relevance of holidays in modern society. Holidays are a complex socio-cultural phenomenon that reflects the cultural spirit, historical memory, and aesthetic worldview of a people [2.470].

Festivals are not just an entertainment or mass cultural event, but an important socio-cultural event that embodies the historical experience, artistic thinking and national worldview of the people. Through them, traditional music, folklore, crafts, national dishes, costumes, customs, and rituals will be presented to the general public. The educational significance of festivals is invaluable, especially in increasing the interest of the younger generation in national heritage and in fostering a sense of historical memory, national pride, and cultural belonging.

Each festival consists of symbols representing the inner world of any nation, enriched with numerous symbols, traditions, religious and secular beliefs, and serves as an important tool in the process of self-awareness and strengthening the identity of society. Through holidays, people remember their history, rediscover their cultural heritage, and pass it on to future generations. It is precisely because of this feature that festivals are at the center of many sociological and cultural studies. Festivals and ceremonies are the foundation of national identity among many peoples. For example, the Japanese “Hanami” flower festival, the Indian festival of lights “Diwali” the Uzbek tradition “Navruz” - all these are holidays with historical roots and are firmly rooted in the minds of people. Through such festivals, not only is a connection with the past restored, but people each time rediscover and reinforce the elements that distinguish them from other peoples - language, clothing, food, dance, and music. In modern society, festivals are now becoming not only religious or traditional, but also economic, tourism, and political. International festivals held on a global scale, such as the UNESCO Cultural Heritage Festival or the World Culture Festival, not only facilitate dialogue between different cultures but also serve to introduce local festival traditions to the entire world. In this way, national cultures are recognized in other cultural spaces while preserving their identity. However, the process of modernizing festivals may not always lead to positive consequences. Sometimes commercialization can distance a holiday from the public consciousness, turning it into a mere entertainment event.

Therefore, it is very important to adapt festivals to the requirements of the times without losing their original essence. Within the framework of cultural policy, legal and organizational support for local festival traditions and a deep understanding of their role in educating the younger generation are among the primary tasks of modern cultural development. Thus, festivals are not merely a ceremony, but an important platform for people to realize themselves, restore their cultural heritage, and preserve it in the global environment. They protect national values, strengthen and call for identity. For the internal unity of society. In this regard, holidays are becoming increasingly relevant today as a means of intercultural communication and a factor of cultural stability. Festivals and holidays can be considered as a communicative phenomenon as a factor in the stability of cultural identity. They constitute a set of cultural codes that preserve historical consciousness, social memory, and intergenerational cohesion within a society. From this perspective, festivals are also viewed as a means of socio-cultural reconstruction—they ensure the continuity of cultural norms by recreating past traditions in a modern format. According to the theory of “invented traditions” put forward by cultural scholars E. Hobsbaum and T. Renger, many modern holidays stem from the political, economic, and ideological needs of the present day rather than from their original historical roots [3.432]. While this is an effective means of strengthening identity, on the one hand, it can weaken the original essence of holidays on the other.

Festivals and holidays constitute the semantic field of cultural identity. In this case, the components of culture—language, religious ceremonies, national clothing, folklore, and musical heritage—are recoded in the social consciousness and enter a stage of renewal. Therefore, it is important to analyze festivals not only from the perspective of traditionalism but also as cultural performances. Through performances, culture is not only expressed but also rediscovered through

active participation by members of society. Holidays play an invaluable role in the process of cultural transmission, that is, in transmitting cultural values from one generation to another. In particular, through festival ceremonies involving children and youth, information about national history, heroism, and ancient traditions is conveyed in a natural context. This ensures their active participation in the identification process and strengthens their sense of belonging to their nation.

However, according to the opinions expressed by postmodernist cultural analysts, modern festivals are increasingly under threat of commoditization, that is, subordination to market mechanisms. This can turn them into a tourist product, an entertainment industry, or a tool for political propaganda. In such conditions, close cooperation between public policy, civil society, and the scientific community is necessary to preserve the original cultural and philosophical essence of the festival. Furthermore, in the context of globalization, festivals are becoming an area of intercultural interaction. On the one hand, this can strengthen intercultural ties, but on the other hand, it can lead to the loss of certain national characteristics. Therefore, when organizing festivals, it is recommended to adhere to the principles of cultural diversity, that is, to balance openness and interactivity while preserving national identity.

It can be said that festivals are not passive spectacles, but active socio-cultural processes that are multi-level and multifunctional means of forming, maintaining, and strengthening identity [4.284]. When studying them, it is necessary to take into account not only an anthropological approach but also communicative, performing, economic, and political aspects. Holidays and festivals play a special role in the development of humanity as complex socio-cultural phenomena that distinguish the historical layers of folk culture, awaken public consciousness, and strengthen national identity. Through them, not only are traditional customs revived but the continuity of intergenerational heritage is also ensured, and national pride, historical memory, and aesthetic taste are formed in the younger generation. At the same time, festivals are emerging in modern society as a means of cultural communication, a platform for social integration, and a strategic tool for cultural policy.

In conclusion, festivals play a significant role in preserving, transmitting, and promoting cultural identity in contemporary society. They provide a dynamic cultural space in which historical memory, traditional knowledge, customs, rituals, music, dance, crafts, language, and other forms of intangible cultural heritage are reproduced and shared with wider audiences. Through festivals, cultural values are not only preserved as elements of the past but are also reinterpreted in accordance with present-day social and cultural needs.

The importance of festivals is especially evident in the context of globalization, where increasing cultural interaction may lead to both enrichment and the gradual weakening of local cultural distinctions. In this regard, festivals serve as an effective mechanism for strengthening a sense of belonging, reinforcing national and local identity, and supporting intergenerational continuity. They also create opportunities for young people to engage directly with traditional culture, helping to transform cultural heritage from an abstract concept into a living social experience.

At the same time, the preservation of cultural identity through festivals requires a careful balance between tradition and innovation. Excessive commercialization, superficial representation, or the adaptation of traditional practices solely for entertainment may weaken their original cultural meanings. Therefore, festival programs should be developed with the active participation of tradition bearers, local communities, artists, researchers, and cultural institutions. Such cooperation can help ensure authenticity while allowing traditional cultural expressions to develop naturally in modern forms.

Festivals also contribute to intercultural dialogue by presenting the cultural heritage of different communities in an open and accessible environment. This process encourages mutual understanding, cultural respect, and the exchange of artistic and social experiences. In addition, well-organized festivals may contribute to cultural tourism, regional development, creative industries, and the international recognition of local traditions.

Thus, festivals should be regarded not merely as celebratory or entertainment events, but as important socio-cultural institutions capable of preserving collective memory, strengthening cultural identity, supporting cultural continuity, and transmitting traditional values to future generations. Their sustainable development and scientifically informed organization can become an important factor in safeguarding cultural diversity and ensuring the continuity of cultural heritage in a rapidly changing world..

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