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SOCIAL AND CULTURAL CAPITAL OF CREATIVE INDUSTRIES

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Original article

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SOCIAL TIES AND CULTURAL CAPITAL AS KEY FACTORS OF SUCCESS IN THE CREATIVE INDUSTRIES

The paper examines the system of social relations and analyzes the forms of cultural capital characteristic of those working in the creative industries of the Kaliningrad region. The methodology is based on the theory of P. Bourdieu, who considered the mutual convertibility of economic, cultural, and social capital. In June 2025, eight focus groups were conducted among the creative industries' symbolic community in the region. A variety of social connection types were revealed, which are based not only on the activities and professional skills, but also on participation in various events, the desire for innovation, emotional closeness, shared interests and values, human qualities, principled positions on moral and ethical issues, commercial interests, and online presence. Almost all participants in the focus groups mentioned that social ties are an important factor for success in the creative industries. At the same time, cultural capital is the foundation of a career; it helps to maintain authority and provides opportunities for success. The focus group participants emphasized the value of incorporated cultural capital, which accumulates gradually and requires serious personal effort, although the influence of family and environment can be very significant. It is concluded that success in the creative industries is a product of a harmonious combination of a system of social ties and solid cultural capital.

Keywords: *Kaliningrad Region, social connections, cultural capital, creative industries, creative activity, focus group*

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FACTORS INFLUENCING CAREER CHOICE AND JOB SATISFACTION IN THE CREATIVE INDUSTRIES OF THE KALININGRAD REGION

The article considers the factors that determine career choice and job satisfaction among those working in the creative industries of the Kaliningrad region. The theoretical basis of the study was the concept of the creative class of R. Florida, which highlights the values of individuality, meritocracy, diversity and openness as key characteristics inherent to this social group. The empirical base comprised eight focus group interviews with 63 respondents representing different segments of the region's creative industries. The study identified five groups of factors that influence professional choice: orientation towards individuality and autonomy; the psychological need for creative self-realization; the influence of the social environment: family, friends, and teachers; the desire for publicity and social activity; and material motives. It was shown that, despite economic, infrastructural, and organizational difficulties, the majority of respondents plan to continue working in the creative field, which is associated with satisfaction with the specific conditions of work in the creative industries and the expectation of positive changes in their careers. The results of the study have both theoretical value for understanding the specifics of a creative class operating in a peripheral region and applied value for developing measures to support creative industries.

Keywords: *creative industries, creative community, creative profession, work motivation, job satisfaction, Kaliningrad region*

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SOCIAL AND CULTURAL CAPITAL OF CREATIVE INDUSTRIES

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Original article

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FROM COMMUNICATION TO INTEGRATION: THE ROLE OF THE RUSSIAN LANGUAGE IN INTERETHNIC INTERACTIONS AND THE EDUCATIONAL FUTURE OF MIGRANT CHILDREN

This study addresses the lack of empirical data necessary for developing effective strategies to support the linguistic, educational, and cultural integration of children from migrant families. Children with migration backgrounds face a variety of challenges when adapting to a new social, legal, economic, cultural, and particularly educational environments. This process demands not only linguistic competence but also the ability to internalize new normative frameworks and educational practices. This article examines the adaptation process of migrant children by exploring three key aspects: their migration history, post-migration adaptation, and how acquired adaptation skills shape their prospects for future success in a new social environment. The analysis relies on primary sociological data, including a survey of 830 migrants from Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan working in Moscow and the Moscow Oblast, along with semi-structured interviews with 213 children with a migration backgrounds aged 14–17 (interviews were conducted with parental consent in 2024–2025). The findings reveal that the adaptation of children with migration backgrounds is a prolonged and multidimensional process, within which educational adaptation operates as a key institutional mechanism for navigating and assimilating into a new social environment. Successful educational and social adaptation not only facilitates a child's personal development but also functions as critical capital for future attainment shaping professional trajectories, academic advancement, and civic participation. Additionally, the study explores the social conditions that enable or constrain successful adaptation, with particular focus on the role of family, educational institutions, and other social agents in fostering migrant children's integration into learning environments that promote development and socialization. Future studies should longitudinally track adaptation trajectories across diverse contexts, examining intersectional factors (gender, class, ethnicity) and institutional policies' long-term impacts on educational mobility and social inclusion.

Keywords: *migration, migrants, adaptation of migrants, adaptation of children, educational adaptation, language adaptation, cultural adaptation, social adaptation*

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Introduction

As global mobility increases, more families are migrating, bringing children into the process. As a result, the challenges of adaptation for these children are becoming increasingly relevant. Relocating to a new country or region presents obstacles such as language barriers, cultural differences, religious preferences, social exclusion, and the need to adjust to a new legal, economic, and cultural environment. This study aims to address these issues.

Adaptation to the educational process is crucial for children from migrant families, as it significantly impacts their future well-being and success, whether they settle in a new place or return to their homeland. The adaptation skills they develop will help them navigate new challenges throughout their lives. Adaptation is commonly considered a lifelong process, as society constantly evolves, requiring individuals to develop new adaptive skills (*Petrovsky* 1982).

The adaptation of children from migrant families was brought to the spotlight by President Vladimir Putin, who addressed it during a meeting of the Council for Interethnic Relations on March 30, 2021 (*Zasedanie Soveta* 2021). Since then, various measures have been proposed to tackle the challenge. In 2024, the President officially supported a draft law restricting access to public schools for children who do not speak Russian, as their inability to follow the curriculum at the required level was cited as a barrier to integration (*Vladimir Putin podderzhal* 2024).

This article examines the adaptation process of migrant children by exploring three key aspects: their migration history, post-migration adjustment, and the role of acquired adaptation skills in shaping their future success in a new social environment.

The research problem stems from the need to better understand the challenges children with migration backgrounds face when adapting to new social, legal, economic, cultural, and particularly educational environments. At the same time, there is a lack of evidence-based methods and practical recommendations to help these children develop the adaptation skills necessary for successfully realizing their potential in the future.

Literature Review

The analysis of scholarly literature on the adaptation of children with a migration background reveals several major aspects. Migration theories, both traditional and

modern, were originally designed to study adult migrants. However, in recent years, these frameworks have expanded and become more integrated, making it possible to encompass contemporary migration processes involving children of various ages (*Galli* 2024).

According to recent studies and findings from entire research laboratories, the prevailing view among scholars and policymakers is that children from migrant families are regarded as dependents who complicate migration dynamics.

Children are often considered a major obstacle to the realization of migration plans, as they are commonly viewed by policymakers and researchers in one of three ways: as “dependents” requiring care and resources, as a kind of living “baggage” that must be taken along, transported across borders, and resettled, or as “left behind” without full parental care and upbringing (*Mazzucato, Schans* 2011).

However, some studies present a different perspective, suggesting that migrant children can, in certain cases, take an active role in response to the migration of adult family members (*Dobson* 2009; *Huijismans* 2011). Research also highlights that minors can significantly influence their parents, for example, by affecting decisions on whether one or both parents — or even the entire family — should migrate (*González et al.* 2016; *Hernández-León et al.* 2020).

Russian sociologists, including V. Yu. Ledeneva, analyzed empirical data and outcomes of various migration policy measures, which led them to the conclusion that children from migrant families constitute a unique social and demographic group. Due to their age, social and cultural characteristics, they require targeted support to ensure their social, linguistic and cultural adaptation. Ledeneva (*Ledeneva* 2021: 109) emphasizes that “through children, their parents are more successfully integrated into the host society”.

Extensive research on this topic demonstrates that the study of children with migration backgrounds has developed into a well-established field.

Most scholarly works agree that the socio-linguistic adaptation of children from migrant families is key to their adjustment to life in new social, legal, economic, cultural, and particularly educational environments. Empirical sociological studies provide strong evidence supporting this.

T. N. Yudina and M. G. Kotovskaya (2019) focus on the socio-linguistic adaptation of children who are non-native speakers and their migrant parents. A special emphasis is made on one of the key factors in achieving a high degree of adaptation — language proficiency: “the knowledge of the Russian language among non-native schoolchildren at the time of school enrollment, both in general and as a necessary skill for mastering other subjects” (*Kotovskaya, Yudina* 2019: 45).

An important direction in researching the adaptation of children with a migration background is interdisciplinary socio-pedagogical work, particularly within the context of «migration pedagogy». E. V. Bondarevskaya and O. V. Gukalenko (*Bondarevskaya, Gukalenko* 2000) examine the social and pedagogical challenges faced by minors with limited Russian proficiency, focusing on their adaptation to the educational system, interactions with classmates and teachers, high academic expectations, and school discipline.

T. V. Portnova (*Portnova* 2017) studies the adaptation of children with a migration background, highlighting how their interactions form unique interethnic school dynamics. She emphasizes the development of adaptation skills through active participation in the educational process, facilitating social and cultural adaptation.

G. E. Zborovsky and E. A. Shuklina (*Zborovsky, Shuklina 2013*) examine the adaptation of children with migration backgrounds in Russian schools, drawing on empirical research and case studies of their adaptation experiences.

The adaptation of children from migrant families has been a subject of interest for Russian scholars, particularly in a regional context, with a notable example being the study by Y. A. Afonykina et al. (*Afonykina 2014*), which explores these issues in the Russian North.

Some empirical research focuses on the adaptation to new social, legal, economic, cultural, and educational environments: for example, A. Ya. Makarov (2010) relies on the data collected in Moscow and the surrounding region. His sociological study compares primary data from two groups of students — children with migration experience and local students — enrolled in schools in the Moscow agglomeration. He shows that migrant children face challenges adapting to the new educational environment, while local students showed “anti-migrant attitudes and the unpreparedness of most participants in the educational process” to welcome migrant children (*Makarov 2010*).

The study of inter-institutional cooperation for the comprehensive adaptation of children with migration backgrounds remains highly relevant, particularly in examining interactions between migrant parents and school teachers (*Alexandrov et al. 2012*).

Researchers examine migrant parents’ hopes and aspirations for their children, including educational goals and professional growth prospects, as well as the challenges of early, often illegal, employment of minors, which can harm their future opportunities (*Poletayev 2013*).

Research Methods and Rationale for Their Selection

Our review of academic literature and regulatory documents underscores the need for a clear definition of social adaptation. Federal Law «On the Fundamental Guarantees of Children’s Rights in Russia» No. 124-FZ dated July 24, 1998a defines a child’s social adaptation as «an active process in which a child facing difficult life circumstances adjusts to societal norms and rules while overcoming psychological or moral trauma»¹.

To enhance clarity, we propose the following definition of adaptation specifically for children from migrant families: *social adaptation is a continuous process of actively adjusting to new environmental, linguistic, educational, cultural, social, and psychological conditions*. This process applies to minors born in their country of origin who have moved to the host region with migrant parents holding foreign, Russian, or dual citizenship.

To describe this group, we introduce the term “*children with a migration background*”, referring to minors who were born in their country of origin and relocated with migrant parents holding foreign, Russian, or dual citizenship. Additionally, the study employs the concept of *allophone children*, defined as “a group of students whose families have recently moved to Russia, whose parents also struggle with the Russian language, and who primarily communicate in their native language at home. For these children, Russian is not their mother tongue, making it difficult for them to understand, perceive, and use it for communication” (*Ushakov 2015*).

Empirically, the study relies on primary sociological data collected by the research team of the Institute for Demographic Research, Federal Scientific Research Sociological

¹ On the Fundamental Guarantees of Children’s Rights in Russia: Federal Law No. 124-FZ dated July 24, 1998. <https://www.consultant.ru>.

Center of the Russian Academy of Sciences. The authors of this article participated in developing the research tools, conducting the study, and processing the data. The study comprised the following:

1. Survey: A total of 830 migrants (291 from Tajikistan, 280 from Uzbekistan, and 259 from Kyrgyzstan) were surveyed to assess their perceptions of current adaptation measures and outcomes for children, identify barriers, and suggest adjustments to migration policy to improve its effectiveness on the regional level. Respondents were selected using the snowball sampling method. Selection criteria included respondents' arrival in Moscow or Moscow Oblast after 2010 and having one or more children (either born in the host country or having migrated with their parents). The study was conducted in 2024.
2. Semi-structured interviews with children: Interviews were conducted with 213 adolescents aged 14–17 to examine their social well-being, the factors aiding or hindering their adaptation (e. g., school, peer groups, family), their social position during adolescence, and their views on transitioning to early adulthood in terms of education, employment, family life, and experiences with bullying (if applicable). The study also aimed to assess the level of intercultural interaction in schools and its impact on migrant children's adaptation. Respondents were selected using the snowball sampling method. Selection criteria included parental consent for their children's participation and the children's willingness to take part in the study, in line with our approach. The study was conducted in 2025.

Materials and Methods

Difficulties in accessing and analyzing statistical data pose a significant limitation for this study, which aims to examine children's adaptation and track their life path from being born into a migrant family to future success. The gaps in available data — such as incompleteness, inconsistent collection criteria, and fragmentation — hinder efforts to assess the scale of the issue and determine the scope of necessary preventive and corrective measures.

A broad generalization suggests that child migration is an increasingly intensive process. Over the past 30 years, global migration flows of children have doubled. Today, an estimated 36 million children with a migration background live in a country different from their birthplace, representing approximately 13% of the total international migrant population (UNICEF 2021). Moreover, the situation is exacerbated by the large number of children within refugee populations: while minors account for about 30% of the world's population, they make up a much higher share — 40% — of forcibly displaced persons (UNHCR 2022).

In Russia, as in other countries, statistics on children with a migration background are both quantitatively incomplete and qualitatively underdeveloped. Researchers primarily rely on aggregated figures reflecting the general migration situation or on citizenship-related data from sources such as Rosstat and the Ministry of Internal Affairs. However, these databases are periodically updated and technically optimized, making in-depth analysis difficult. As a result, studies must often rely on fragmented information from various empirical sources. No precise data exist on the number of children in this category residing in Russia, though some partial figures are available.

In 2020, Russia had approximately 800,000 foreign minors, of whom only 200,000 were enrolled in Russian educational institutions. An additional 180,000 foreign children visited Russia annually for tourism, typically as part of family travel. This means that around 25% of school-age children with migrant parents do not attend school (*Velyaminova* 2020). Preliminary estimates suggest that Russia has about 500,000 foreign citizens of school age, in a total school-age population of 16.5 million (*Odoevtseva* 2024).

According to research conducted in 162 schools across Moscow, Moscow Oblast, St. Petersburg, Leningrad Oblast, Tomsk, and Pskov, “ethnic Russian students account for 85–93% of students, while students from other ethnic backgrounds make up only 7–16%. The highest proportion of non-Russian students is found in the Moscow region (16.2%)” (*Aleksandrov et al.* 2012: 179).

In St. Petersburg, in the 2021/2022 academic year, one of the schools in the Kalininsky district had only one Russian-speaking student among 30 pupils aged 7–8 (*Zheleznyakova, Lysakova* 2024: 704). In the Moscow metropolitan area, for example, in the Naro-Fominsk urban district, the number of foreign students stands at 731 out of a total of 19,142 students (Sistema elektronnoho monitoringa). However, according to the Institute of Education of the Higher School of Economics, as of 2018, these figures are underestimated by a factor of four. Their data suggest that migrant children make up between 7% and 16% of students in schools across Central Russia, with the highest concentration in Moscow Oblast (16.2%). The estimated distribution of migrant students per class is as follows: in high school, there are 2–4 students from CIS countries; in middle school, 5–6 students; and in primary school, 7–9 students per class (*Kozhanova* 2019).

The majority of foreign children enrolled in Russian educational institutions come from families of citizens of CIS member states, including those working under joint economic programs of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), as well as international labor migrants, primarily from neighboring countries (*Ledeneva* 2021).

According to our survey of migrants in Russia, about 40% of citizens of Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan arrive in the Moscow agglomeration with their children (*Osadchaya et al.* 2024).

Results

Turning to the analysis of research findings, our questionnaire survey asked parents: ‘What aspects of adaptation in Russia were most challenging for your child?’ The results reveal two primary pain points according to parental reports: (1) social integration with local peers and (2) Russian language proficiency. This pattern holds consistently across migrant groups from different countries of origin (see *Fig. 1*).

The comprehensive analysis of parental survey data and semi-structured interviews with children from migrant backgrounds reveals that students entering Russian preschools, primary and secondary schools frequently encounter adaptation challenges rooted in limited Russian language proficiency. This linguistic barrier significantly impedes their integration into Russian-language educational environments, primarily by restricting peer socialization with native-speaking children.

Among the children interviewed, 43,1% rated their Russian proficiency as excellent, 47,1% as good, and 9.8% as satisfactory. Overall, their self-assessment of language skills is relatively high. However, it should be noted that these interviews reflect only the children’s subjective perception of their abilities.

Our analysis of the collected materials shows that mastering Russian is essential not only for academic success but also for integrating into the broader cultural and social environment. Language proficiency enables children to familiarize themselves with new cultural norms, values, and educational expectations, overcome psychological challenges, and develop a richer sense of identity.

One child from a migrant family emphasized the importance of psychological resilience in the adaptation process:

“For children of foreigners adapting to Russia, the most important thing is probably inner strength — to withstand all the pressure, the fact that everything has changed: the environment, the children, the culture, the location, the weather — everything changes drastically. And you have to get through it. Inner strength, yes, in order not to break down” (Informant 30, 10th-grade student).

A lack of fluency in the language of instruction creates barriers to learning, affecting not only individual academic performance but also the overall classroom experience. When students struggle with the language, it slows down the pace of instruction, ultimately lowering the quality of education for the entire class. As a result, the language barrier becomes a critical factor shaping the effectiveness of the education system in its efforts to support children from migrant families. When linguistic challenges are minimal, adaptation in other areas tends to be smoother.

One of our respondents said the following:

“I don’t really have much to say because I believe my adaptation process went really smoothly. You could say I was lucky, because not everyone who comes from Central Asian countries is able to adapt so well and so quickly. I was probably also fortunate with my surroundings, as most people face bullying, discrimination, or inequality. But I didn’t experience anything particularly severe. So I think my socialization has been more than successful” (Informant 195, college student).

High school and college students generally have a strong command of both spoken and written Russian, which means that they are able to follow the curriculum and confidently plan their future. Below are a few more excerpts from the interviews. A subset of children demonstrates realistic future orientation, expressing aspirations to obtain fulfilling professional occupations that align with both personal interests and economic security needs:

“I want to become a speech therapist and stay in Russia” (Informant 49, college student).

“I really want to develop a career in programming. I’m currently learning different coding languages so that it will be easier for me later on” (Informant 129, college student).

“I’m studying to become a pastry chef and plan to pursue this profession in the future. I have one year left in college, and I’m preparing for the Unified State

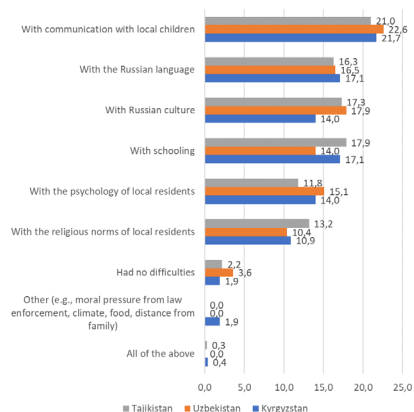


Fig. 1. Distribution of parental responses to the question: ‘What aspects of adaptation in Russia were most challenging for your child?’, %

Exam. After that, I'll most likely go to university" (Informant 189, college student).

"Right now, I'm studying at a medical college. In the future, I'd like to go to university and become a cardiology specialist" (Informant 20, college student).

However, other children exhibit less realistic aspirations, envisioning careers as high-status professionals (e. g., lawyers or economists) while simultaneously anticipating substantial leisure time for travel and entrepreneurial ventures such as modeling businesses:

"I want to become a lawyer as soon as possible while also pursuing my hobbies. I'd like to join a modeling agency. At first, I'd like to work for someone else, but maybe later, I'd open something of my own" (Informant 191, college student).

"In the future, I see myself as a successful economist with a solid education, having graduated from university with excellent results and working in my field. In my free time, I plan to travel a lot" (Informant 76, college student).

Furthermore, migrant children may express entrepreneurial aspirations rather than conventional occupational preferences:

"I want to become an influential person to make sure that my family never lacks anything. I want to support my parents. I'm more interested in technical subjects, and I want to work for myself — working for someone else would mean settling for less than I aspire to" (Informant 10, 9th-grade student).

Children emphasize the significant role of familial traditions in their lives:

"I want to follow in my father's footsteps. He has always been an auto painter, and I really like this kind of work. I want to paint cars too. [Do you want to start your own business and work for yourself?] Yes, absolutely. That's my big dream. One day it will come true — I'll start a small business and be my own boss" (Informant 90, 9th-grade student).

"First and foremost, I see my future with a family — my husband and children. But I also want to get an education. I want to work in design, particularly web design" (Informant 79, college student).

The majority of the interviews reflect a positive trend in the adaptation process. Other Russian sociologists have reached similar conclusions, backing them with empirical evidence, including excerpts from interviews with children. For example:

"During my first year, I didn't talk to anyone in class at all. I mostly kept to myself. But after that, once I made friends, we started helping each other however we could" (*Demintseva et al. 2017: 93*).

Children from migrant families do not form a homogeneous social group, as they exhibit significant differences across key parameters, including the family's socio-economic status, parental education level, professional background, and other social characteristics.

An analysis of the survey conducted among parents with a migration background revealed a direct correlation between the family's financial situation and the child's level of adaptation — the better the financial standing, the higher the degree of adaptation. This applies to adaptation at school, within the peer group, and in extracurricular social circles.

Furthermore, an interpretation of the survey results showed a correlation between parents' self-assessed adaptation level and their child's proficiency in Russian. The higher the parents' level of adaptation, the better (in their view) their child's command of the language of the host community.

Our analysis of semi-structured interviews with children from migrant families has shown that Russian society and the education system were largely unprepared for the massive arrival of children from abroad. These children face language difficulties and struggle to adapt to cultural differences.

While children from migrant families learn conversational Russian through interactions with Russian-speaking peers and school, they still find writing difficult. Persistent problems with spelling and punctuation negatively impact their academic performance and hinder their ability to pass exams successfully, which, in turn, limits their opportunities to enroll in vocational education programs and pursue their desired careers.

Additionally, we found that a major challenge is the significant gap between the knowledge migrant children acquired in their countries of origin and the Russian educational standards. This gap is further exacerbated by their limited proficiency in Russian, which increases migration-related stress and creates additional barriers to successful adaptation in the new sociocultural and educational environment.

Discussion

Our results align with previous research. For example, E. I. Surovtseva (2015) argues that the ethnic or national background of migrant children is not the primary trigger for bullying or other forms of peer aggression. Instead, she identifies limited proficiency in Russian — reflected in frequent grammatical errors, a restricted vocabulary, and a strong phonetic accent — as the main cause.

The situation, however, is further exacerbated by the psychological perception of social inequality, as well as cultural and social differences, which heighten the child's sense of "otherness" in their new environment. These factors contribute to the marginalization of migrant children and their exclusion from collective interactions, creating a fertile ground for aggression and discrimination (*Surovtseva 2015*).

M. G. Kotovskaya and T. N. Yudina note that most student respondents prefer peers from migrant families, especially of the same nationality, over local students. Among those surveyed, 71% reported having close friends from migrant backgrounds (*Kotovskaya, Yudina 2018: 120*). Their study examines the socio-linguistic adaptation of migrant children, identifying factors that contribute to maladaptation and impact social and psychological well-being. This affects both internal processes and external interactions. Adaptation occurs at multiple levels — macro, micro, and individual — shaped by the social environment, which influences children's adaptation strategies and their perception of ethnic identity (*Kotovskaya, Yudina 2018: 115*).

Migration often creates tensions between family values and the norms of the host society. If unresolved, these conflicts can hinder a child's adaptation as well as their psychological and social development.

A major challenge is the high mobility of migrant families, leading to frequent relocations that set them apart from the more settled local population. Additionally, these children face emotional stress when entering school, navigating an unfamiliar environment with different social and ethical norms. Separation from family members further adds to their psychological strain (*Alba, Holdaway 2013*).

Researchers are advancing the transnational childhood framework, highlighting how children develop within migratory social spaces as active agents of migration processes, possessing distinct perspectives and future orientations (*Peshkova 2021*). Research on migrant children's

adaptation highlights educational and social barriers in schools (*Vernez, Abrahamse 1996*).

Another serious issue is the potential conflict between children from migrant families and their parents, particularly when the family adheres to traditional values that contradict the norms of the host society (*Crul, Holdaway 2009*). Each successive generation develops its own distinct worldview that markedly diverges from that of its parental generation (*Mukomel 2022*). For instance, girls from Muslim families living in European or North American countries often face pressure from their families, which further complicates their adaptation to the new cultural environment (*Rumbaut 1994*).

Experts note, however, that second-generation migrants may feel even more discriminated against, as they, being native-born citizens of the country, have higher expectations and aspirations (*Crul et al. 2012*).

Scholars examine strategies for supporting migrant children in small-town schools, focusing on socio-psychological mechanisms that protect well-being and promote positive intergroup perceptions (see, for example, *Ledeneva 2021*). These strategies should be grounded in research on adaptation and integration, supported by sociological and statistical data, and guided by relevant legal regulations.

Schools with a high proportion of students from migrant backgrounds tend to lose prestige among local families, leading to declining enrollment, particularly in upper-grade levels (*Demintseva et al. 2017: 87*). The same study cites an interview with teachers from Moscow schools:

“In fact, this is how the situation at school developed. Four or five years ago, per capita funding was introduced, and the principal openly told us that she was simply enrolling everyone who applied, even students from neighboring schools. People would say, “Go to XX, they’ll take you — everyone gets in there. “ As a result, the number of children from Central Asia grew so much that Russian students gradually began leaving the school” (*Demintseva et al. 2017: 86*).

Recent studies indicate that the adaptation of children with a migration background is becoming a growing concern in Russia, affecting the legal, pedagogical, and psychological aspects of their integration into new social and educational environments. To tackle this challenge more effectively, it is necessary to devise evidence-based measures (*Omelchenko 2020*).

It is proposed to focus efforts on the key aspect of adaptation — the socio-linguistic component — by prioritizing social-pedagogical and socio-cultural initiatives. In addition to the optimization of the learning process, emphasis should be placed on developing specialized extracurricular activities (*Zheleznyakova 2023: 107*).

Some studies caution against overemphasizing support for migrant children, arguing that they should take a more active role in their own adaptation. This perspective may be suitable for schools where migrant students are a small minority. However, in the Moscow metropolitan area, where migration is more prevalent, the concept of “benevolent indifference” is less applicable (*Wolfson 1999*).

Federal and regional authorities play a key role in migrant children’s adaptation, focusing on developing and implementing social and cultural support programs.

Proposed initiatives include a clear set of mandatory measures for social, linguistic, and cultural adaptation, additional educational programs focusing on the Russian language and cultural values, and state financial mechanisms to support these efforts. Funding will also prioritize targeted allocations and teacher training.

At the initial stage, identifying children in need of extra support and establishing clear inclusion criteria is essential. Adaptation challenges affect not only foreign minors but also those born in Russia or who have acquired citizenship. The level of support required depends on age, while cultural distance — shaped by differences in language, religion, and ethnicity—can further complicate adaptation.

The social and cultural adaptation challenges faced by this group often cause deviant behavior, which is frequently rooted in ideas of national superiority. These ideas may arise from limited experience in foreign cultural environments and insufficient skills to overcome cultural barriers. Measures to address such behavior should include teaching the Russian language and providing cultural education, focusing on social norms, behavioral rules, and traditional values in Russian society. In international practice, cultural assimilators — educational tools for learning the norms and values of a new culture — are often used to tackle these issues.

When designing programs for this group, it is important to engage them in initiatives that promote national civic identity and social cohesion. This includes educational projects that provide accurate information about Russia’s history, culture, and traditions, as well as participation in national children’s and youth organizations.

Successful integration of migrant children into the educational and social environment requires an effective tracking system and open access to relevant statistical data for all stakeholders. Special attention should be given to children with limited Russian proficiency, as language barriers pose significant challenges. Currently, targeted support for these children is often insufficient, further hindering their social and educational adaptation.

As part of the urban educational infrastructure, it is advisable to create a specialized platform that would facilitate experience exchange between various organizations, including general education institutions, education committees, information and methodological centers (IMCs), and higher education institutions. Such a platform would help coordinate efforts and develop unified approaches to solving problems related to the adaptation of migrant children.

Additionally, it is necessary to develop and implement a citywide or district-wide system for teaching Russian as a foreign language. Ideally, children who speak foreign languages should undergo an intensive Russian language training during their first year, after which, based on testing results, they would gradually start learning general education disciplines. Public organizations, especially those with educational licenses, should be involved in this process (*Mozgovaya et al. 2021*). This approach will help minimize language barriers and create conditions for the successful integration of children into the educational process and life of the host community.

Our analysis of data from semi-structured interviews leads us to conclude that socio-linguistic adaptation is a key stage and foundation for the successful adaptation of children from migrant families. Mastering the Russian language opens the door to fully introducing the child to new cultural norms, values, and educational expectations. It also plays an important role in overcoming psychological challenges and expanding the child’s personal identity.

Conclusion

In this article, we analyzed the key issues faced by children with a migration background in the process of their adaptation. For children from migrant families, adapting to a new country is a long and challenging process that involves fitting into unfamiliar legal, economic,

cultural, and educational settings. It includes the child's introduction to different cultural norms, values, educational requirements, mastering the Russian language, overcoming psychological difficulties, and enriching their own identity. Successful adaptation, particularly within the educational domain, facilitates not only the child's personal development but also shapes their life course trajectories and vocational prospects, ultimately determining long-term social integration outcomes and achieved status in the host society.

The study examines the social conditions that facilitate and hinder successful adaptation, with particular emphasis on the role of the family, educational institutions, and other social structures in creating favorable conditions for learning, communication, and psychological well-being of children.

The study's findings can be of interest to experts in law, sociology, psychology, and pedagogy, as well as to those developing social-educational programs for children from migrant families. At the federal and regional levels, authorities can use these results to inform measures promoting the socio-economic and demographic well-being of the whole country and its regions.

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Original article

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IDENTITIES OF URBAN AND RURAL POPOULATION IN TATARSTAN: VECTORS OF SOLIDARITY AND PATTERNS OF AGREEMENT

The article examines the indicators of national, regional and ethnic identities among urban and rural residents of the Republic of Tatarstan, reflecting their relevance and intensity. The purpose of this work is to consider the various types of identity and see whether they encourage people to consolidate, assess their impact on interethnic relations in the multicultural atmosphere of Tatarstan, identify the vectors of solidarity, the value markers of identities and their emotional content. The paper is based on the materials from the study “ Ethnosocial Processes in Territorial Groups of the Modern Russian Population of the Ural-Volga Region”, carried out in 2026, as well as the results from earlier studies conducted in 2021–2025. It can be concluded that in the capital of the Republic the identity indicators are more stable. In general, different types of identities don't seem to contradict each other seriously in the hierarchy of identities among the residents of the Republic of Tatarstan. Respondents identified themselves both as Russian citizens and as members of their ethnic group, as well as residents of the Republic.

Keywords: *civil identity, ethnic identity, regional identity, consolidation, solidari-
zation, consent*

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Original article

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THE DEVELOPMENT OF RUSSIAN POPULATION STATISTICS IN THE 19TH CENTURY: FROM THE GERMAN DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS SCHOOL TO ACADEMIC STATISTICS

The genesis of Russian national population statistics dates back to the 19th century. At the beginning of the century, the first textbook on statistics was written in the Russian Empire, and by the end of it, Russian statistics had been shaped as the independent scientific theory. This study aims to describe the evolution of the Russian statistical thought in the 19th century, as set out in two textbooks from that period written by academicians C.F. Hermann (1808) and N. Bunge (1876). Besides, the article analyzes three statistical schools — the German school of descriptive statistics (G. Achenwall), the English school of political arithmetic (W. Petty), and the mathematical-statistical school (A. Quetelet). It also studies the influence of Western scientists and the International Statistical Congress 1853–1878 on the Russian statistical thought in the 19th century. Throughout the century, Russian statistical thought evolved from the blind imitation of the German descriptive statistics school to the unique approach of academician N. Bunge who was influenced by the International Statistical Congress and critically reinterpreted the statistical legacy of the Belgian scientist A. Quetelet.

Keywords: *the history of population statistics, descriptive statistics, political arithmetic, mathematical-statistical school, the average man, International statistical congress, academic statistics*

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Original article

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THE ROLE OF DEMOGRAPHIC STATISTICS IN IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION: THE CASE OF THE WESTERN BALKANS (BOSNIA AND HERCEGOVINA, NORTH MACEDONIA, MONTENEGRO)

The article discusses the interdependence of politics and demography using the example of post-Yugoslav countries. In addition to objective factors (such as natural population growth and decline, migration), the ethnic structure of the population is affected by various subjective and situational circumstances. A characteristic example can be found in the Western Balkans, where after independence and a change in political systems, the identity is being built in a unique way in each country. At the same time, the topic of demographic evolution is present everywhere in public and political rhetoric. One could argue that population censuses are becoming objects of political competition. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, for example, the size of ethnic groups is significant since the party system and the state itself are built on ethnic principles, where the demographic composition has shaped the unique political identity of Muslims/Bosniaks in relation to Orthodox/Serbs and Catholics/Croats. In Montenegro, it is important whether residents classify themselves as Montenegrins or Serbs; the independence of the Montenegrin language from Serbo-Croatian is also a sensitive issue. In Slovenia, the most monoethnic country of the former post-Yugoslav republics, the legal status of non-Slovenes is not equal, and there is a public debate about the status of representatives of the ethnic groups from former Yugoslavia who have settled in the Republic of Slovenia. The controversial issues of ethnostatistical registration of the population in Serbia, North Macedonia and Croatia persist on the social and political agenda.

Keywords: *The Balkans, identity construction, statistics, censuses, demographic evolution*

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Original article

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**NATION-BUILDING AND POPULATION CENSUSES
AS ETHNODEMOGRAPHIC ENGINEERING:
THE CASE OF THE WESTERN BALKANS
(SERBIA, CROATIA, SLOVENIA)**

Ethnic identity and demographic processes, cultural assimilation and ethnic mimicry have been closely linked with politics and ideology throughout history. Political motivation often influences the collection of data on ethnicity and vice versa. The results of ethnostatistical studies can directly impact interethnic relations in terms of claims to participation in government bodies, the creation of regional autonomies, the official use of languages, territorial boundaries, etc. Due to the influence of political and other social circumstances, a phenomenon known as ethnic transfer arises. Ethnostatistics in the former Yugoslavia is a striking example of the politicization of census questions, which was especially prominent at certain historic periods. In addition to changes in the self-identification of individuals and entire groups, statistical results were also influenced by changes in the counting and classification methods of ethnic groups. Ethnocultural data in Yugoslav and post-Yugoslav censuses are recorded through the prism of answers to three groups of questions: national/ethnic affiliation, native language, and religion. This study focuses on the first group of responses, which concerns the situation in Serbia, Croatia, and Slovenia. Questions about native language and languages in the Balkans in general, as well as questions about religious beliefs, are highly politicized and require separate analysis (see, in particular, Martynova 2022).

Keywords: *The Balkans, nation building, identity, statistics, population censuses*

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CHALLENGES OF INTEGRATION AND CROSS-CULTURAL INTERACTION

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Original article

© *Anna Maltseva, Natalia Shilkina, and Maria Borgardt*

THE SOCIO-CULTURAL IDENTITY OF RUSSIAN-SPEAKING GERMANS ON SOCIAL MEDIA: A COMPARATIVE STUDY IN RUSSIA, KAZAKHSTAN, AND GERMANY

The article examines the sociocultural identity of Russian-speaking Germans and how it is represented in social media. The ontological issue concerns the risks of impoverishing the established sociocultural ties and the anti-Russian transformation of the sociocultural identity of Russian-speaking Germans against the background of the spread of anti-Russian rhetoric. Both Russian and German researchers highlight the paramount importance of sociocultural identity over political identity for Germans. Focusing on sociocultural identity and based on V. N. Myasishchev's concept of relations and A. Sacks' concept of involvement, the authors examine the involvement of Russian-speaking Germans in online representations and substantiate the hypothesis that social media are significant platforms for the reproduction and formation of sociocultural identity. A constructive information campaign on social media, based on the priority of the sociocultural unity among Russian-speaking Germans, could contribute to the task of strengthening the sociocultural ties between nations and creating a solid foundation for Russian-speaking identity. The empirical basis of the study was data collected through offline observation in Russia (St. Petersburg Youth Club Jugendblitz); in Kazakhstan (Astana German Youth Club Diamant and Wiedergeburt Society); and in Germany (Würzburg Youth Club of the informal self-organized initiative community of Russian Germans) between May 2022 and May 2025; online surveys of Russian-speaking Germans living in Russia, Kazakhstan and Germany between 3 and 20 May 2025; content analysis of key Telegram channels of Russian-speaking Germans "RusDeutsch", "Germans of Kazakhstan", "Riwweldeutsche", data collection between 1 March 2024 and 1 March 2025. The study found that that Russian-speaking Germans perceive themselves as a single people formed due to a unique social history on the border of two cultures. It is revealed that the online practices and ways of representing the sociocultural identity of Russian-speaking Germans vary depending on their country of permanent residence. It is concluded that the media is a platform for the reproduction and dynamics of the sociocultural identity of Russian-speaking Germans and a resource for adapting to new social and political conditions.

Keywords: *sociocultural identity, Russian-speaking Germans, Russian Germans, Germans of Kazakhstan, heat map of identity*

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CULTURAL-HISTORICAL HERITAGE IN INTERETHNIC RELATIONS IN NORTHERN AZOV SEA AREA (EASTERN NOVOROSSIYA)

This article presents a comprehensive analysis of interethnic relations in Novorossi-ya—a historical and geographical region characterized by diverse ethnocultural traditions and complex dynamics of interethnic interaction. The study employs a multidimensional approach to examine the evolution of the region's ethnic composition, beginning with colonization processes in the 18th century, using historical-genetic and comparative-historical methods of analysis. The authors meticulously trace the transformation of the ethno-demographic structure of the territory under the influence of migration flows, state national policies, and socio-economic changes throughout the imperial, Soviet, and post-Soviet periods. Of particular scholarly significance is the analysis of the consequences of Soviet ethnic policies and post-Soviet transformations, which led to substantial shifts in the ethnic self-identification of the region's population and the nature of interethnic relations. The article develops a typology of ethnic identity issues, mechanisms of stereotyping, and conflict-inducing factors that have intensified in the context of recent geopolitical changes. Using an interdisciplinary approach that integrates methodological principles from ethnology, social psychology, political science, and conflict studies, the authors identify and systematize key risks in interethnic relations. These include: doctrinal conflicts, residual anti-colonial worldviews, stereotypical perceptions of ethnic groups, consequences of demographic transformations caused by mass migration and urbanization. Significant attention is devoted to a critical analysis of state policies toward national minorities and an assessment of the effectiveness of cultural and educational programs aimed at fostering ethnic tolerance and preventing interethnic conflicts. The authors propose a scientifically grounded set of recommendations for harmonizing interethnic relations, encompassing educational, awareness-raising, and integration measures tailored to the region's specificities. The conceptual foundation of these solutions lies in fostering a consolidated national identity while preserving ethnocultural diversity and strengthening social solidarity among different ethnic groups.

Keywords: *Novorossiya, interethnic relations, ethnocultural interaction, ethnic identity, stereotype conflicts, risks of interethnic conflicts*

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Original article

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THE ARMENIAN COMMUNITY IN AFGHANISTAN (XVIITH–XXTH CENTURIES)

This paper provides a comprehensive analysis of the historical trajectory of the Armenian diaspora in Afghanistan, an understudied ethnic and religious minority. The study focuses on the modern period, tracing the community's full life cycle from its rise as an influential trade and craft group and integration into the elite Afghan society, to its subsequent rapid decline. The research emphasizes the mechanisms used to preserve collective identity within a foreign cultural environment, reconstructing the daily life and cultural practices of the Armenians using memoir sources. It is argued that the community's initial stability was due to the region's unique environment of religious tolerance prevalent in Afghan society at the time. The diaspora's crisis is attributed to both internal and external factors. A critical turning point was the loss of political immunity during the centralization of the state under Emir Abdur Rahman Khan. Ironically, their successful integration, culminating in a dynastic marriage during Dost Mohammad Khan's reign, eventually led to their vulnerability, making them hostages in local power struggles. Global geopolitical shifts, such as increased British influence and changing trade routes, further eroded the community's economic base. The conclusion highlights the need for continued comprehensive research, utilizing archival materials and future field studies in Afghanistan to further explore this subject.

Keywords: Afghanistan, Armenians, Armenian community

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Original article

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LANGUAGE ACTIVISM IN MODERN ABKHAZIA AND ITS CONNECTION WITH THE DIASPORA

The linguistic situation in modern Abkhazia is an understudied topic. Considering that Abkhaz is officially the state language in Abkhazia, one might erroneously get the impression that the role of other languages in the Republic is small; however, functional dominance belongs to the Russian language, which serves as a lingua franca in the multi-ethnic environment. According to the sociolinguistic classification, the state of affairs in modern Abkhazia should be classified as an unbalanced type of a two-component exoglossic linguistic situation, where two main languages of communication, Abkhaz and Russian, compete. Both state and public institutions are trying to influence the linguistic situation in Abkhazia. Cyberspace, in this context, also serves as a tool used by language activists both to popularize interest in learning Abkhaz and to implement the learning process itself. To date, 116 Abkhaz Internet communities are registered on the social network. Of these, only 7 are dedicated to language topics. They mostly discuss the shortcomings of language teaching methods in schools, express their dissatisfaction with the level of native language proficiency among the youth, and sometimes propose their own programs which, in their opinion, contribute to the preservation and development of the Abkhaz language. At the same time, these online language communities are not very active; out of the 7 groups, only one, “Apsshuala” (Аҭшыуаӡа), is consistently active. Youth associations contribute to the preservation and popularization of their native language. For example, in 2022, students of the Abkhaz State University developed an educational application for those who want to study their native language. This is a clear indicator of the desire of youth communities to preserve their language. Both Abkhaz students and their like-minded peers from South Ossetia and the North Caucasus participated in developing the application. On Instagram, language pages dedicated to learning the Abkhaz language are becoming more and more common. Graduates of the Philological Faculty of ASU (Abkhaz State University), having united in a group, create educational videos and post them as reels on Instagram. Regardless of the language, such associations are generally similar in their structure and principles.

Keywords: *Abkhazians, language activism, Abkhaz language, diaspora, cyberspace*

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THE PRESERVATION OF TRADITIONS IN THE FAMILIES OF CAUCASIAN ORIGIN IN A FOREIGN ETHNIC ENVIRONMENT

The preservation of cultural traditions in families living outside their ethnic “ancestral homeland” is a current ethnographic problem. The main question is whether elements of family culture that are associated with ethnic tradition are preserved, transformed or lost in such a situation. The study was conducted among the families of employees at the Kola Scientific Center of the Russian Academy of Sciences (the city of Apatity in the Murmansk Region), whose members define their origin as Georgian, Armenian and Kabardian. The vast majority of informants come from multi-ethnic families. Ethnocultural traditions are examined using both the material artifacts: ethnically marked relics, family archives and national cuisine, and intangible heritage: language, religion, rules of conduct, rituals, festive ceremonies (e.g. weddings). The study is mainly based on the author’s field materials obtained in 2024. The purpose of the study is to record and show the extent to which ethnic culture is preserved in the families of the Kola Scientific Center employees with a “Caucasian” ancestry. Special emphasis was placed on the practical application of certain traditions and the transfer of relevant experience to the next generation. A comprehensive methodology was used with a focus on the oral history method. The study summarizes the main factors that facilitate the preservation and development of ethnocultural traditions within families living in a foreign ethnic environment. Firstly, it’s the active cultural position of a family member of Caucasian descent and a special effort made to teach the language and traditions to their family members. Secondly, it is very important to maintain close ties with the ethnic homeland and contacts with relatives. Thirdly, the second parent (in the study, these were mainly Russians) should not prevent the child from being introduced to a “different” culture by the in-laws; that is, the quality of the marriage is an important factor. Fourthly, the personal motivation of the descendants in “appropriating” a certain Caucasian culture is of crucial importance.

Keywords: *ethnic identity, language preservation, religious traditions, ethnically marked material heritage, rituals*

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Original article

© *Anastasia Belolutsckaya, Anna Golovina, Ivan Grinko, Grigoriy Gurin, Irina Krishtofik, Natalya Zhabina, and Tatyana Shcherbakova*

INTEGRATION CHALLENGES: FACILITATING THE ACCULTURATION PROCESS OF ADOLESCENTS WITH MIGRATION EXPERIENCE IN AN URBAN ENVIRONMENT

In the context of the growing cultural diversity of Russian cities and the increasing number of children with migration experience, the problem of their integration into the educational, social, and cultural environments is becoming especially relevant. This article is devoted to the analysis of theoretical approaches to acculturation and the description of a model of an educational event aimed at promoting the integration of migrant adolescents into the urban environment through interaction with cultural institutions. The authors rely on modern concepts of acculturation (in particular, the models of D. Berry and R. Bourhis), emphasizing the importance of the integration strategy as the most favorable for the psychological and social adaptation of adolescents. The key difficulties faced by children with migration experience are considered, including language barrier, culture shock, intercultural communication difficulties, discrimination and bullying. Particular attention is paid to the role of educational institutions and teachers in creating an inclusive environment, as well as the potential of museums and other cultural institutions in forming a positive experience of interaction with the host community. The article presents the authors' model of a museum educational event aimed at supporting teenagers in the integration process. The model was tested at the Museum of Moscow and included a series of activities that promoted the formation of a sense of belonging among participants, understanding of the city's history and symbolic acceptance of a new cultural space. The results of the testing showed that such formats of work can be effective in overcoming social distance, developing cultural confidence and choosing an integration strategy. The article may be useful for teachers, museum staff, specialists in the field of intercultural communication and developers of integration programs in a multicultural urban environment.

Keywords: *migration, acculturation, integration into the environment, teenagers, museum anthropology*

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MUSLIMS OF MOSCOW

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Original article

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THE EVERYDAY LIFE OF MOSCOW'S ISMAILI MUSLIMS IN THE CONTEXT OF SOCIOCULTURAL CHANGE

Moscow, a metropolis with a centuries-old history, is today a complex conglomerate of cultures, religions, and identities. In this polyphony, the Ismaili community holds a special place as one of the least studied yet dynamically evolving religious groups in the capital. Ismailism a branch of Shia Islam. One of the indigenous and compactly residing Ismaili communities inhabits the high-mountain valleys of the Pamirs — the Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Region (GBAO) of the Republic of Tajikistan. As a result of labor and other migration to Moscow, an Ismaili community has emerged here. The everyday life of Moscow Ismailis is a unique blend of tradition and modernity, rooted in the global umma and seeking its place in Russian society. This everyday existence, like a sensitive barometer, reflects profound sociocultural changes taking place both within Russian society itself and in the global Muslim world. The article is based on the author's field materials collected in the spring and summer of 2025 in Moscow. The author analyzes the everyday life of Shia Ismailis in the context of the changes occurring in their lives due to migration from Tajikistan to Russia.

Keywords: anthropology of Islam, everyday life, everyday Islam, Tajik Ismailis, Islam in Russia, sensory ethnography, religious rituals

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IN SEARCH OF THEIR PLACES: RELIGIOUS IDENTITY AND LEISURE PRACTICES OF MUSLIMS IN THE URBAN ENVIRONMENT (THE CASE OF MOSCOW)

This article analyzes how urban spaces become venues for leisure practices, where Muslims from different ethnocultural groups construct their everyday life and, to some extent, reduce interethnic tensions. A soccer field and a playground serve as unifying urban spaces, linking the immigrant community and local residents. The paper examines everyday activities, values, rituals, leisure interactions involving religious identities, as well as barriers in ordinary urban settings. It is concluded that Muslims combine cultural and religious practices outside of urban spaces, demonstrating the flexibility of religious identity in the context of everyday leisure. The findings demonstrate that leisure spaces provide a platform for building trust, mutual support, and mutual adaptation.

Keywords: *religious identity, leisure, Muslims, immigrants, space, urban Islam*

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THE SACRED IN THE MUNDANE: MATERIALITY AND RITUAL PRACTICES OF MOSCOW MUSLIMS IN EVERYDAY LIFE

This article explores the relationship between the sacred and the material in the everyday ritual practices of Muslims in Moscow, with a focus on the performance of the salah (namaz) — an obligatory five daily prayers. The author analyzes how this ritual shapes a Muslim's everyday life and how the performance of namaz is influenced by material elements (prayer mat, clothing, space) and bodily practices. The study examines the concept of the sacred and its relevance in the Islamic context, considering the interaction between the sacred and the profane in the daily lives of Muslims, as well as the role of material culture in shaping religious experience. Special attention is given to how materiality becomes a condition for the sanctification of prayer time, as well as the role of space and objects necessary for performing namaz. The research involved practicing Sunni and Shia Muslims who demonstrated regularity in their prayer practices and a value-driven approach to the practical execution of religious prescriptions in general. The analysis shows that namaz is not only a religious obligation but also an affective act that establishes a deep connection between the individual and the divine, contributing to the construction of the everyday scenarios for a believing Muslim and shaping their life space. The study is based on ethnographic data, Islamic theological sources, and anthropological approaches.

Keywords: *namaz, sacred, profane, materiality, Muslims, Islam*

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RUSSIAN CONVERTS TO SHIA ISLAM IN MOSCOW: EXPERIENCE OF INTERACTION AND IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION

Using personal narratives as empirical material, this article analyses the phenomenon of Russian converts to Shia Islam as a brand new occurrence in the post-Soviet context. Studying recent converts residing in Moscow, the author proposes an analytical perspective alternative to the securitization approach: rather than focusing on real and perceived threats to the state security allegedly posed by new converts, the author suggests that attention should be paid to the living dynamics of religious conversion and to the processes by which a new identity is constructed in an urban setting. The examined case studies indicate that conversion to Shia Islam is largely motivated by individual inner needs and spiritual quests rather than by political orientations. Based on field research materials, the author concludes that Russian Shias do not constitute a homogeneous group but rather a community of individuals with diverse life trajectories and tactics, who independently constitute their new “self” within a religious practice that is new to them and who experience differing degrees of success in their attempts to integrate into Moscow’s established Shia religious networks.

Keywords: *Shiism, converts, religious conversion, religious practices, Moscow, Russian Muslims*

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Original article

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THE “WE DRESS THE TAJIK WAY!” CAMPAIGN: PRO ET CONTRA

In present-day Tajikistan, special attention is paid to the appearance of its citizens. In 2018, two illustrated manuals on recommended clothing were published: instructions for students and teachers, and special instructions for girls and women. Every spring since the early 2020s, the “We dress the Tajik way!” (“Тоҷикона менӯшем!”) campaign, initiated by the Committee for Women and Family Affairs, has been held in the country. From March 1 to May 31, female residents are encouraged to wear national costumes made of satin and adras fabric, as well as dresses with colorful embroidery known as chakans. News reports of ladies in traditional costumes marching in an organized manner along the streets in various parts of the country are shown on state and regional television channels, as well as websites of universities. The author will study the arguments both for and against this initiative, find out which population segments are most affected by it, and outline the difficulties in turning the original concept into reality. The article will also deal with problems such as what clothes are considered “alien” in modern Tajikistan, and how affordable and comfortable the recommended national clothes are. Another matter of interest is the media coverage of the campaign, and Internet users’ reaction to it.

Keywords: Central Asia, post-Soviet Tajikistan, ethnography, culture, national dress

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Original article

© *Nadezhda Dubova, Tolkunai Kadyrbekova, and Michail Nikiforov*

THE STARRY SKY OF THE KYRGYZ

The article analyzes information on the folk astronomical knowledge of the Kyrgyz people, collected since the beginning of the 20th century (Kuftin 1916) to the present. Thanks to the support of the Russian Science Foundation (Project No. 22-18-00529), two expeditions were undertaken in 2023–2024 to collect new information. 121 informants from different regions of Kyrgyzstan were interviewed. The surveys were conducted in the form of in-depth interviews based on pre-designed questionnaires comprising 38 basic questions. Processing the questionnaire materials made it possible to determine the frequency with which stars, asterisms, and planets were mentioned and used, and frequency profiles characteristic of each of the selected regions were obtained. Based on these profiles, a methodology is proposed for assessing the similarity of astronomical knowledge in different regions, which made it possible to identify sets of stars that characterize “pastoral”, “agricultural”, and “urban” clusters that are linked to the types of farming in modern Kyrgyzstan. Based on the previously proposed methodology for determining the level of astronomical knowledge (Dubova, Nikiforov 2024), appropriate estimates were obtained for each region of Kyrgyzstan. The “highest rates” of folk knowledge were found in Jalal-Abad (Aksy district) and Naryn regions (Zhungal district). In general, it can be argued that traditional astronomical knowledge is best preserved in isolated regions with less influence from modern culture.

Keywords: *Kyrgyzstan, ethnoastronomy, assessment of the level of folk astronomical knowledge, spatial modeling*

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KARAKALPAK EPIC TRADITION AS A SOURCE FOR STUDYING BIRTH RITES

The Karakalpaks, like other peoples, are distinguished by their rich culture, traditions, and rites. Childbirth rites are particularly important among them, reflecting the significance of the arrival of a new family member and their future role in society. Studying these rituals is an important task for scholars. Folklore works, particularly Karakalpak heroic epics, are used as key sources, as they are not only poetic works of art but also valuable historical and ethnographic heritage. This article explores childbirth-related customs through the analysis of the epics «Alpamysh», «Koblan», and «Kyrk Kyz». Childbirth-related topics they cover include the birth of a long-awaited child, cutting the umbilical cord, announcing the joyful news (suyinshi), the forty-day postpartum protection period (chille), and the naming ceremony. The study applies structural-semantic and comparative-historical approaches. By comparing similar traditions among the Kazakh, Kyrgyz, Karachay, and other Turkic peoples, the article identifies shared cultural roots and parallels.

Keywords: *epic, rituals, suyinshi, cord cutting ceremony, naming ceremony, chille, sunnet*

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ON THE STUDY OF THE MULTICULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE OF RELIGION FACTORS IN CENTRAL AND EASTERN EURASIA

This article analyzes some social, historical and ethno-cultural factors that influenced the spread of religion in the South-Eastern Siberia region, also frontier territories, especially among the Turkic population. The author examines how religion was introduced to the area through the Silk Road, shifts in social powers, population migrations, and the cultural and religious receptivity of Muslim peoples. Furthermore, the article highlights how the ethnic composition of South-Eastern Siberia and the spiritual worldview of its population created favorable conditions for the adoption of Islam. The role of Islam is explored not only as a religious system but also as a civilizational phenomenon that shaped social, legal, and cultural institutions. Employing historical-comparative, geopolitical, and content analysis methods, this study for the first time provides a comprehensive comparative overview of Islamization in this region within the framework of social, public, and ethnocultural influences. The article also thoroughly examines the social and cultural impacts of neighboring states, as well as the historical and political events during the Arab and Mongol invasions. Particular attention is given to the interconnections of religions along the Silk Road, described with scholarly rigor. This research constitutes an important source for readers interested in the religious history of South-Eastern Siberia. By addressing the Islamization in the context of the interplay between social and ethno-cultural factors, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of the religious history in this region.

Keywords: *Eurasia, South-Eastern Siberia, religion, culture, Russia, Kazakhs, China, Uyghurs, Silk Road*

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Introduction

South-Eastern Siberia is a historical and geographical region, with an ethnically diverse population primarily engaged in cattle breeding, agriculture, and traditional crafts (*Simay-ijiang et al.* 2019: 262).

This confessional diversity makes it possible to understand not only the cultural and religious combination of Islam between ethnic communities in South-Eastern Siberia, but also the historical and civilizational dynamics of the region. This region stands out as a space that has witnessed the spread and interaction of various religious traditions throughout history (*Baitenova, Duissenbayeva* 2012: 163). As a result of its geopolitical location and strategic importance along the Silk Road (*Hasanov* 2025: 59–60), this region has become a crossroads

of various civilizations. As a result of historical evolution, the religious landscape here has become multi-layered. The history of the development of religions here can be divided into four stages, the first one being the predominance of local religious beliefs and shamanic traditions (up to the 4th century BC). In this era, religious practice was based on the cult of ancestors. The second stage (4th century BC — 9th century CE) was marked by the dominance of Buddhism, while Zoroastrianism, Manichaeism, Daoism, and Nestorian Christianity co-existed alongside it. This religious pluralism persisted in the region for nearly a millennium (*Lenz-Raymann* 2014: 120–121). The third stage (9th–16th centuries) witnessed the spread of Islam. In the southern part, Islam gradually replaced Buddhism, while in the northern areas Buddhist traditions maintained their influence. Over time, Islam gained strength, diminishing the impact of other religions such as Zoroastrianism, Manichaeism, and Nestorian Christianity. The fourth stage (16th century — present) saw Islam established as the principal faith of the region. During the period of the Eastern Chagatai Khanate, Islam was consolidated politically and socially, and the majority of ethnic communities embraced the religion. Nevertheless, Buddhism and Daoism persisted among Chinese communities, while in the 17th century the Oirat Mongols' adoption of Tibetan Buddhism reinvigorated religious diversity in the north. Later, Catholicism and Orthodoxy were also introduced, though they never achieved broad influence (*Van Wie* 2008: 16–17).

Thus, although Islam became the dominant religious system in the region from the 16th century onward, the region's religious history has consistently been characterized by its multi-confessional structure. The article examines the stages of the spread of Islam in the South-Eastern Siberian region, as well as its geopolitical and ethno-cultural influences. Islam is the youngest among the world's religions. Whereas Buddhism and Christianity emerged during the era of slavery and adapted to medieval conditions, Islam appeared and developed as a genuine historical and cultural phenomenon of the medieval period. While Buddhism and Christianity evolved within specific religious and cultural frameworks, Islam distinguished itself by selectively integrating significant elements from various religious and cultural traditions. This synthesis shaped the comprehensive scientific system, legal foundations, cultural practices, and social patterns of Islamic civilization. Such processes paved the way for scientific renewal, civilizational advancement, and the establishment of a new system of values within Islamic culture. During the Abbasid Caliphate (9th–12th centuries), the so-called “Eastern Cultural Renaissance” defined a new global historical dimension of Islamic civilization (*Barthold* 1993: 68). This period stimulated not only religious practices but also the development of Sharia law, architecture, literature, Arabic script, and calligraphy. At the same time, contributions to philosophy, medicine, and the natural sciences reinforced the universal character of Islamic civilization.

Thus, while preserving its distinctive religious and historical features, Islamic civilization assimilated the cultural achievements of previous societies and, by shaping universal human values, exerted a long-term influence on global civilization. This study aims to systematically analyze the particular features of Islam's establishment in South-Eastern Siberia and to demonstrate its significance in the region's religious and cultural evolution.

Research Methods and Sources

In order to identify the geopolitical and ethno-cultural factors that contributed to the spread of Islam in the South-Eastern Siberian region, several scientific methods were used. 1 — Through the historical-comparative method, the influence of political events and his-

torical changes in the region on the development of Islam was determined. 2 — the spread of Islam through the method of geopolitical analysis was considered not only in terms of religious, but also in terms of international relations and spatial factors. 3 — formed the basis for a systematic review of academic papers, monographs, and articles through the method of content analysis. Also, official census materials, scientific research, and data from international organizations were used to study the current ethno-demographic situation. In the course of the study, the requirements of academic ethics were observed, and content analysis, thematic coding, statistical, and comparative methods were used in the processing of qualitative and quantitative data. The use of such methods made it possible to comprehensively explain the process of Islamization in South-Eastern Siberia, its historical foundations, modern features, and challenges.

The spread of Islam into the South-Eastern Siberian region of Asia began during the period of the Umayyad Caliphate (661–750). According to historical sources, the introduction of Islam into Central Asia and the South-Eastern Siberian region dates back to the 7th–8th centuries. Records indicate that the first Arab missionaries arrived around the year 670 (*Gafurov* 1972: 216). By the early 8th century, Islamic missionary activity in the region had become noticeably more active (*Manzhibayev* 2009: 105). Some accounts suggest that the earliest attempts by the Arabs to disseminate Islam among the nomadic tribes of Central Asia took place during the reign of Caliph Hisham ibn Abd al-Malik (724–743). The introduction of Islam into Central Asia took place during the Umayyad Caliphate (661–750). A specific starting point of this process is often associated with the military campaign of the Arab commander Qutayba ibn Muslim in 714. It was during this period that Turkic tribes first encountered Islam under conditions of military confrontation. Historian B. Gafurov notes concerning this event: “Qutayba was not interested in the commercial significance of this center but in its strategic role: by seizing Isfijab, he hoped to cut off the main routes used by the Turkic armies to support their allies in Central Asia” (*Gafurov* 1972: 216). This evidence indicates that the Arab military campaigns of that period were not aimed at the complete conquest of the Turkic peoples but rather at securing their own territories against external threats. According to historical sources, Islam began to penetrate Central Asia and South-Eastern Siberia around the 670s through the activities of Arab missionaries. By the early 8th century, the intensification of Islamic proselytization became evident (*Lenz-Raymann* 2014: 119–125).

The Battle of Talas in 751, fought between the Arab forces under Ziyad ibn Salih and the Chinese troops led by General Gao Xianzhi, marked a decisive turning point in the consolidation of Islam in Xinjiang and Central Asia. As a result of this conflict, the Chinese army suffered a complete defeat, and the regions of Zhetysu and South-Eastern Siberia were freed from Chinese influence. The Battle of Talas created historical preconditions for the wider spread of Islam and Islamic civilization across Central Asia. Although the region’s location along the Silk Road facilitated the penetration of diverse religions and cultures, Islam spread peacefully among the local populations, gradually strengthening its socio-cultural influence (*Chyngoguang* 1998: 92). In 935, Satuk Bughra Khan, the ruler of the Karakhanid state, became one of the first Turkic sovereigns to embrace Islam and actively promoted it at the state level. As a result, the cities of Kashgar and Atush in the South-Eastern Siberia emerged as important centers of Islamic culture. In 960, Islam was officially declared the state religion of the Karakhanid dynasty. The Arab historian Ibn al-Athir describes this period, stating: “In the year 349 of the Hijra (960 CE), 200,000 households of a certain Turkic people accepted Islam” (*Hansen* 2013: 275–277).

This account demonstrates the wide dissemination of Islam across Zhetysu and the Far

East during the 9th–10th centuries. The spread and development of Islam in South-Eastern Siberia was significantly influenced by Central Asia. Although a portion of the Islamic literature available in the region consisted of works by Arab scholars, the majority were authored by intellectuals originating from Central Asia. Medieval Eastern culture provided an impetus for the advancement of Muslim science and civilization, shaping the formation of religious thought in the South-Eastern Siberian region. For instance, the Qur’anic exegesis al-Kashshaf by the Khwarezmian scholar Abu al-Qasim al-Zamakhshari (1075–1144), al-Tafseer al-Kabeer by al-Fakhr al-Razi (1149–1209), as well as the hadith compilations of Imam al-Bukhari were widely studied among the peoples of South-Eastern Siberia and came to be regarded as foundational religious texts. These works not only facilitated the consolidation of the Islamic worldview but also contributed to the flourishing of local scholarly and cultural traditions (*Chyngoguang* 1998: 92).

Between the 11th and 13th centuries, the South-Eastern Siberian region experienced the domination of the Khitan and later the Mongol powers. The political entities that emerged during this period generally followed policies of religious inclusiveness, which allowed Islam to coexist with Buddhism and other traditions. After the Mongol conquests, large parts of this region together with Transoxiana were incorporated into the Chagatai Khanate. Within the cultural framework of this state, the Chagatai literary language took shape (*Lenz-Raymann* 2014: 121–122). This language was raised to a higher level through the works of poets such as Alisher Navoi and spread as a folk language. The literary and religious heritage written in the Chagatai language includes such works as Ibn Ali’s “Kipchak book”, “Nakhzh Al-Faradis”, “Yusuf and Zuleikha”, and Saif Sarai’s “Gulistan-i Ibn Turk”. In addition, the works of such Central Asian scientists as Muhammad Haidar Dulati and Shah Mahmud Zhoras were translated into Chagatai and widely distributed among the local population. This cultural and linguistic process continued during the Manchu rule of the Qing Kingdom (*Manzhbayev* 2009: 105).

During this period, the Sufi branch of Islam, which had a profound influence on the spread and consolidation of Islam in Central Asia and the Kazakh steppes, began to gain ground. Sufism, which emerged in the 8th century within the framework of Islamic civilization, was based on Islamic ethics and spiritual-ascetic practices. Its primary aim was the cultivation of the human soul, the restraint of the nafs (carnal desires), and the attainment of closeness to God. The term sufi is often linked either to the Arabic word suf (“wool”), symbolizing the coarse woolen garments worn by early ascetics, or to the Greek word sophia (“wisdom”), highlighting its intellectual and spiritual dimensions (*Cetinkaya, Billings* 2023: 1069–1070).

Tasawwuf encompasses the belief system, spiritual practices, and ethical norms of the Sufis. Its main principles include abstaining from worldly pleasures, purifying the self, striving for spiritual perfection, and approaching God through sincere love and ma’rifa (gnosis). The Sufi tradition did not confine itself to the external rituals of Islam but emphasized the cultivation of the inner self. For this reason, it played a distinctive role in the history of the spread of Islam, particularly among the Turkic peoples. The Sufis paid special attention to spirituality and the purity of souls in the name of love for Allah. In Islamic Civilization, Sufism has the main goal of overcoming human lust, striving for spiritual perfection. In Central Asia, Sufi tariqats were formed between the 12th and 17th centuries and had a deep influence on the religious and spiritual life of the region. Among them, Khoja Ahmed Yasawi, the founder of the Yasawi Tariqat, took a special place in the spread

of Islam among the Turkic peoples. This tariqa was distinguished by its interpretation of Islam as a spiritual teaching close to folk culture or a worldview. Through the Yasawi tradition, Islam became deeply rooted in the customs, literature, and social relations of the Turkic community, laying the foundation for the development of subsequent Sufi schools (*Baitenova, Duissenbayeva* 2012: 163).

The Mongol invasion temporarily impeded the spread of Islam in South-Eastern Siberia and Central Asia. As a result of the conquests, numerous cities were destroyed, centers of science and culture were plundered, mosques and madrasas were demolished, and trade relations along the Silk Road suffered significant disruption. However, over time, a process of revival began in the region. The Mongol rulers and the tribes under their control gradually embraced Islam and adopted the Turkic language. This development strengthened religious and cultural integration in the area and paved the way for the revitalization and wider dissemination of Islam across the nomadic steppe. Consequently, Islam became firmly embedded in the spiritual life of local ethnic groups and influenced various social strata of the population. In general, the Mongol rulers did not exert religious pressure on the Muslim community but instead pursued a policy of tolerance. This created a favorable environment for the gradual strengthening of Islam in the region. The adoption of Islam by the rulers of the Golden Horde further enhanced the religion's authority in both state and public life. Berke Khan (1255–1266) is regarded as one of the first Mongol rulers to embrace Islam. Medieval sources emphasize the significant role of the Sufi milieu in Bukhara in his conversion. For instance, Siraj al-Din al-Juzjani reports that Berke Khan accepted Islam at the hands of Sayf al-Din Bakhrazi, while 14th-century Arab historians Ibn Khaldun and al-Ayni note that he converted under Shams al-Din al-Bakhrazi, a disciple of Nazhm ad-Din Kubra. In a later period, Ozbeg Khan (1312–1342) elevated Islam to the status of the state religion. Contemporary accounts state that during his reign, more than ten mosques operated in the capital of the Golden Horde, and the khan himself was known to perform the five daily prayers without fail. As a result, Islam became the primary factor of political and cultural integration among diverse tribes, serving as a unifying force across the steppe (*Tizengauzen* 1941: 369).

Some medieval sources indicate that Berke Khan embraced Islam even before ascending to power. For example, the Arab geographer and scholar al-'Umari records that Berke's conversion to Islam took place around 1251, on his return from the kurultai at which Möngke was proclaimed Great Khan. Likewise, the Franciscan monk William of Rubruck, who visited the Golden Horde in 1253, notes in his memoirs: "Berke regards himself as a Muslim and does not permit the eating of pork in his court." (*de Rubrouck* 1997: 117–118).

These accounts demonstrate not only Berke's genuine inclination toward Islam but also the immediate influence of his faith on his personal customs and household practices.

The consolidation of Islam among the nomadic population gradually acquired a systematic character. In this process, religious preachers arriving from Central Asia, the Volga region, and other parts of the Muslim world played a pivotal role, with the Sufi tradition followers constituting the majority. The influence of the Naqshbandiyya and Yasawiyya orders extended equally to both the ruling elite and the common people. The khans maintained close relations with Sufi shaykhs, often drawing upon their religious authority to reinforce their own political legitimacy. At the same time, Sufi teachings resonated with the traditional worldview of the nomadic communities, thereby facilitating the deeper entrenchment of Islam in the steppe environment (*Abylov* 2019: 81–82).

Information about the spread of Islam in the region of South-Eastern Siberia is extensively presented in the works of numerous medieval Muslim scholars. In particular, valuable data can be found in al-Idrisi's *Nuzhat al-Mushtakh fi ikhtirakh al-afakh*, Zakariyya ibn Kazwini's (1203–1283) *Asar al-Bilad ua Akhbar al-Ibad*, Qudama ibn Zhafar's (d. 948) *Kitab al-Kharazh ua Sanat al-Kitaba*, Ibn Hurdadbeh's *Kitab al-Masalik ual-Mamalik*, al-Maqdisi's (947–1000) *Ahsanut Taqasim fi Marifat al-aqalim*, and al-Bakri's (11th century) *al-Masalik ua-l-Mamalik*. In addition, works such as Safi al-Din Orun Qoylaqidi's *Nasabnama*, Ibn al-Asir's *al-Kamil fit Tarikh*, Kashifi's *Rashahat*, Ibn Khallikan's *Wafayat al-A'yan*, Khazini's *Zhauahir al-Abrar min Amuaj al-Bihar*, Jami's *Nafahat al-Uns*, Zahir al-Din Muhammad Babur's *Baburnama*, Muhammad Haydar Dughlat's *Tarikh-i Rashidi*, and Utemish Hajji's *Chingiznama* also serve as valuable sources for studying the history of Islamization in the region. In the 16th–17th centuries, the widespread dissemination of Islam in the region was strongly influenced by the close economic, cultural, and spiritual ties between the local Muslim populations and the Tatar Muslims of Central Asia and the Volga region. During this period, scholars and preachers from major Islamic centers such as Bukhara, Samarkand, Tashkent, Khiva, and Turkestan arrived in the region, promoting Islamic teachings and consolidating religious-spiritual traditions. As a result of the integration of the Muslim community in the Far East with Islamic civilization, the religious and cultural development of the region reached new heights. The first half of the 18th century was a difficult period for the people of this region. The local population had to fight for its independence against invaders from all sides, because the Ural Kalmyks, dzungars, Bashkir detachments, and troops of the Central Asian khanates marched on the territory of South-Eastern Siberia. As indicated in historical sources, due to the constant pressure of an external enemy, some residents of the region began to forcibly migrate to the inner regions of Central Asia. Such resettlement, in turn, strengthened ties with neighboring Muslim states and peoples professing Islam, creating conditions for increased cultural and spiritual integration. As a result, Islam became more firmly established in East Turkestan society, which contributed to the strengthening of the Muslim tradition (*Baitenova, Duissenbayeva* 2012: 163; *Lenz-Raymann* 2014: 121–122).

Results

Islam became widely established in South-Eastern Siberia and exerted a profound influence on the ethno-cultural life of the local populations. Islamic values and worldview principles deeply permeated the region's culture and customs, becoming an integral part of both the spiritual and social life of its inhabitants. This influence was evident in language and writing traditions, dance and musical arts, architectural styles, and even in the development of astronomical calendar systems. Moreover, Islam significantly impacted everyday life and worldview, introducing notable changes in culinary practices, clothing styles, and other aspects of material culture (*Israeli* 2012: 253–259).

After embracing Islam, the people of this region began to integrate religious values into the core of their customs, traditions, and beliefs. The foundation of these cultural and spiritual values primarily drew from the verses of the Qur'an, while a significant portion was grounded in the Hadiths and Sunnah, regarded as the secondary sources of Islamic guidance. Customs and traditions constitute a social phenomenon that develops over centuries in accordance with the religious beliefs, daily life, and unique structural characteristics of a nation or community. They represent accumulated life experiences and encompass patterns of behav-

ior established within society, including accepted norms and social practices that informally regulate daily life and distinguish cultural groups from one another. For a nation, customs and traditions serve as principles of living and societal order, shaping consciousness, educational orientation, and systems of practical and spiritual activity. Members of the community are expected to observe these norms, and those who fail to do so are held accountable within the accepted social framework. Historically, in Kazakh society, customs and traditions functioned as such regulatory mechanisms. Examples include celebrations, Nowruz porridge (Nauryz kozhe), marriage ceremonies, guest hospitality, ritual scattering of food (shashu), and communal feasts such as erulik ata (*Abylov* 2019: 79–84; *Israeli* 2012: 261–267).

The educational and social significance of customs is considerable, as they constitute the primary mechanism for transmitting historical, social, cultural, professional, and spiritual values from one generation to the next. Kazakh customary practices include respect for parents and elders, participation in collective rituals such as bayghazy, korimdik, suinshi giving, kade requests, greetings, attributing lineage, and peer humor. Additionally, habitual practices, gestures, superstitions, prohibitions, and learned behaviors all reflect the embodiment of customs. In this way, customary values are regarded as a vital component of a people's cultural and spiritual heritage (*Adilbayev* 2018: 14). The influence of Islam on the peoples of this region, including the Kazakhs as part of the region's demographic composition, can be categorized as follows:

The ethical and Sharia-based foundations of Islam merged with the traditional beliefs of the Kazakhs, fostering a worldview rooted in devotion to God and a human-centered moral framework. Among the Kazakhs, numerous religious figures emerged at various levels, including qadis, spiritual leaders, imams, Islamic scholars, and medrese instructors, who made significant contributions to the religious and cultural development of the community. As Islam became widely disseminated among the Kazakhs, Arab literature and culture gradually permeated their society. Kazakh bards composed unique works based on various Qur'anic narratives. For example, in 1899, Zhusipbek Khoja Shaykhislamuly (1857–1937) published *Qissa-i Hazret Zhusip (Joseph) and Zuleikha in Kazan*. Similarly, Akyt Khaji Ulimzhuuly authored works such as the didactic poem *Akhyrzaman Kui* and the poem *Shughaip*, which depicted Qur'anic events, including apocalyptic scenes and the story of Prophet Shuhaip. In all of these works, the poets glorified Allah and offered blessings upon the Prophet. During the 10th–11th centuries, the spread of Islam in the region gradually displaced the previously used Old Turkic (Orkhon) and Old Uyghur scripts, establishing Arabic script as the dominant writing system. The majority of Uyghur and Kazakh written heritage has been preserved through the Arabic alphabet. Notable works include *Gulistan bi-t-Turki* (Saif Sarai), *Diuni Lugat at-Turk* (Mahmud al-Kashgari), *Kutadgu Bilig* (Yusuf Balasaguni), and *Hibat al-Haqa'iq* (Ahmad Yugnaki), among others. However, the use of Arabic script presented certain challenges. In 1912, A. Baitursynov introduced the first reforms to adapt the Arabic script to the Kazakh language, identifying phonemes unique to Kazakh that were absent in other Turkic languages and creating new characters to represent them. This orthography, called the “New Orthography” or *Töte jazu* (“direct writing”), marked a significant advancement in literacy. Beginning in 1913, it was adopted in madrasahs and, until 1929, in Soviet schools. Baitursynov's modified Arabic script, *Töte jazu*, became the native writing system for over 1.5 million ethnic Kazakhs in China, playing a crucial role in their social, cultural, and educational development (*Cetinkaya, Billings* 2023: 1072–1079; *Manzhibayev* 2009: 105).

Following the spread of Islam, the peoples of South-Eastern Siberia, East Turkestan regarded the preservation of their national identity, culture, language, and religion — and the transmission of these to future generations — as inseparable from the eradication of illiteracy and the establishment of a national educational system. Consequently, a religious education system adapted to both sedentary and nomadic lifestyles developed. Among nomadic communities, during the winter months, children from a single village or clan would gather, and a mullah would be invited from outside to provide religious instruction. This process became the foundational form of education at that time (*Sanik* 2011: 67–70).

Over time, interest in religious education increased, and the number of children acquiring it grew. This created the need to consolidate educational institutions in one place for systematic teaching. During this period, affluent individuals and community leaders from major regions of South-Eastern Siberia pooled their resources to establish small madrasahs dedicated to providing religious education (*Makhmet et al.* 2021: 523–525). Through its diverse functions, Islam introduced new concepts into human consciousness. It called for the cultivation of high moral virtues grounded in faith. These virtues emphasized principles such as truth, justice, equality, freedom, and peace.

The religious education system, which originated in the Chagatai language, began to spread widely across the South-Eastern Siberian region. In areas and villages settled by Muslims, private madrasahs or those attached to mosques were established. Consequently, many affluent families began sending their children not only within East Turkestan but also to Central Asia and even Arab countries to pursue religious education. According to Volume 1 of the History of the Kazakh SSR: “In the 16th–17th centuries, literacy was primarily characteristic of representatives of the feudal elite — khans, sultans, mullahs, and qazis. Children from wealthy families traveled to cities such as Bukhara and Samarkand to study the Arabic language and Sharia. They studied works written by medieval Muslim authors in Arabic, Persian, and Chagatai languages” (*Adilbayev* 2018: 14–19; *Manzhibayev* 2009: 80–85).

The establishment of the religious education system and the teaching of Arabic, Persian, and Chagatai languages in madrasahs began to introduce new vocabulary into the lexicon of the Muslim populations in the region. In addition to religious terms such as Allah, fard (duty), iman (faith), namaz (prayer), imam, shari‘ah, jannah (paradise), and jahannam (hell), numerous other words entered every day and intellectual use, including terms related to culture, literature, truth, happiness, the world, nature, science, and books (*Mynghzanuly* 1990: 41).

The local authorities governing the region invited religious scholars from Central Asia, established mosques and madrasahs in their villages, and began educating children (*Mynghzanuly* 1987: 57).

Islam encouraged attention to the signs of God’s power in the universe and urged believers to establish a personal connection with Allah. Nomadic Muslim Kazakhs fulfilled this connection through acts of worship and by performing their duties faithfully. Islam also promoted compassion, love, mutual assistance, and profound respect for parents, while encouraging the pursuit of knowledge. Scholars who mastered Islamic teachings earned exceptional prestige and respect within the community (*Bihai* 2005: 58–59).

Islam shaped the customs and legal traditions of Kazakhs in the region. The principles of Islamic Sharia served as the foundation for social order, which was further regulated through Abak Kerei’s “Law of the Four Biys and Tore.” As a result, private property among Kazakhs in China was strictly protected, and the principles of individual ownership were reinforced. Crimes, including homicide, were punished in accordance with Sharia

rulings. Penalties for offenders varied according to the nature of the crime and included public beating, stoning, humiliation, fines, or being thrown to the ground.

The “Law of the Four Biys and Tore” represented a continuation of earlier steppe legal traditions, such as Qasym Khan’s Qasqa Zholy, Yesim Khan’s Eski Zholy, and Tauke Khan’s Zheti Zhargy. However, following the administrative control of Altai city near Beijing by the officials known as Wan and Gun, it became the first codified customary-legal system established in the region. Unlike ancient steppe laws, this legal framework was notable for ensuring that all citizens were equally accountable before the law within the scope of Sharia. Distinctive features are observed in proper names, particularly the prevalence of names associated with religious concepts under the influence of Islam. These include the names of prophets mentioned in the Qur’an, such as Musa (Musa), Yunus (Yunus), Dawud (Dawud), Ishaq (Ishaq), and Suleiman (Suleiman); names related to the esteemed Prophet Muhammad; and names conveying the meaning “servant of God,” such as Abdullah (Servant of the One), Abdul Baki (Eternal Servant), Abdurrahman (Servant of the Most Merciful), Habibullah, and Izzatullah (God’s Beloved or Honored). Names honoring Caliph Ali, such as Karimali, Asadullah, Haidar, and Zulfiqar, were also commonly used. Female names also frequently exhibit religious anthroponyms. Anthroponymy (from Greek anthropos “human” and onoma “name”) refers to the collection of personal names within a particular language or region. Examples include Aklima (wisdom, intellect, insight), Adiya (honor, respect), Nurinisa (light of God), and Sharipa (kind, noble, sacred, powerful), among others. The influence of Islamic culture was strongly evident in music and dance. The Chinese historian and musicologist Zhou Jingbao, in his work *Music Culture along the Silk Road*, notes: “The late 16th century marked the Islamization of Xinjiang music. Persian and Turkic musical traditions gradually merged, forming Islamic-Turkic music. This Islamic-Turkic music became the core of the ancient Silk Road musical heritage and aligned with the traditions of the Silk Road urban music” (*Adilbayev* 2018: 14–19; *Manzhibayev* 2009: 80–85).

Regarding the astronomical calendar, nearly all Muslim communities used the Hijri calendar. Religious holidays, particularly Eid festivals, became the most significant celebrations for all Muslims. Food practices, clothing, and burial rites were conducted in accordance with Islamic Sharia law. The architectural development of the predominantly Muslim population in East Turkestan was largely shaped during the Qing Dynasty. For example, the Khayitkar Mosque in Kashgar, inhabited by Uyghurs, was constructed during this period. However, due to differences in lifestyle among Islamic communities, Islamic architecture did not develop uniformly across all ethnic groups. For nomadic peoples such as the Kazakhs and Kyrgyz, whose livelihoods were based on pastoralism, the history of architectural development emerged significantly later (*Bihai* 2005: 93–96).

Conclusion

The study results indicate that the spread of Islam in South-Eastern Siberia was closely linked to several geopolitical and ethno-cultural factors. Geopolitical circumstances, the development of trade routes, and the influence of external states directly affected the dynamics of religious processes, while ethno-cultural factors — such as language, traditions, popular beliefs, and customs — facilitated the penetration of Islam into local communities. The spread of Islam transformed not only the religious sphere but also political and cultural life, leading to significant changes in the social structure of the region. Religious values

and institutions influenced everyday life, legal norms, and moral standards, while their cultural impact was reflected in literature, art, and traditional celebrations.

Marriage Traditions: The traditional marriage ceremonies of the peoples of South-Eastern Siberia closely align with Islamic matrimonial practices. For instance, the legitimacy of a marriage is confirmed through the mutual consent of both parties and the presence of witnesses.

Benevolence and Charity: In the traditions of the peoples, helping others and showing kindness are considered important. Similarly, in Islam, performing acts of charity is an obligation for Muslims. The parallels between these traditions and Islamic principles demonstrate the close integration of Islam into the region's culture. Former customs, such as offering blessings and honoring ancestors, were adapted to align with Islamic requirements (Abylov 2019: 79–80; Tabeikyna et al. 2021: 236–237).

Recitation of the Qur'an: One of the most important religious customs among the peoples of East Turkestan is the recitation of the Qur'an and its transmission from generation to generation. Among the peoples of South-Eastern Siberia, it is a religious right to read the Koran, present it to the public at meals and weddings.

Traditional holidays and Islamic holidays. Such holidays of the peoples of this region as Nauryz, Eid al-Adha, Eid al-Fitr, and the tradition of burying the deceased are combined with important Islamic holidays. This demonstrates that the customs and traditions of the peoples of East Turkestan and the Islamic religion are interconnected, based on mutual respect and harmony. These two systems complement each other, contributing significantly to the spiritual and cultural development of the Far East society (Manzhibayev 2009: 104–105).

Over time, Islam deeply penetrated the traditional culture of various Muslim ethnic groups in the region, becoming a fundamental component of their spiritual identity. However, the majority of these communities managed to preserve significant elements of their ancient cultural heritage. This phenomenon is particularly evident in national holidays, family and social customs, as well as in the continuation of longstanding beliefs and rituals. Nevertheless, as a result of Islam's widespread presence over the centuries, these traditions and beliefs harmonized with Islamic culture, forming an integrated religious and cultural system.

Furthermore, local populations integrated Islamic values with their traditional culture, creating a unique religious and cultural system. This process, taking into account regional characteristics and ethnic diversity, ensured the adaptive and sustainable acceptance of Islam.

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PHYSICAL ANTHROPOLOGY

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Original Article

© *Irina Slavolyubova, and Ivan Filkin*

BILATERAL VARIABILITY OF PLANTAR DERMATOGLYPHICS IN MORDVA-MOKSHA

Bilateral variability in feet papillary patterns is not sufficiently studied. More detailed and comprehensive research is necessary, along with the accumulation of data from different populations. This article presents the results of a study on the bilateral symmetry of plantar dermatoglyphics in 240 Moksha people of southwestern Mordovia. We examined the pattern types in each sole region, triradii, directions of the main palmar lines, and heel ridges. An analysis of the overall feature symmetry showed weak bilateral differences in plantar dermatoglyphics. The only exception is the course of the papillary lines in the heel area, although symmetrical variants predominate for this feature as well. While the level of bilateral symmetry is high overall, it varies in different areas of the foot and depends partly on the variability of dermatoglyphic characteristics. The degree of asymmetry increases from the proximal to the distal areas of the sole and from the fibular to the tibial pads. There are no significant sex differences in the symmetry of the foot's papillary patterns, although this may be due to the small sample size. Trends in feature distribution on the right and left feet of the Moksha people correspond to the data from other groups. Statistically significant bilateral differences are found in the endings of the main plantar lines and the ridges of the heel area.

Keywords: *physical anthropology, plantar dermatoglyphics, bilateral variability, symmetry index, Mordva-Moksha people*

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ARCHIVAL AND HISTORICAL LEGACY

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Original article

© *Elena Soboleva, and Valeriya Sliskova*THE PHOTOGRAPHS FROM ALEŠ HRDLIČKA'S
SIBERIAN-MONGOLIAN EXPEDITION

Aleš Hrdlička, being responsible for creating the Anthropological Department of the future Panama-California Exposition, went on an anthropological expedition to Siberia and Mongolia in 1912. In 1915, his assistant interpreter Theodor A. Fjelstrup managed to visit this World Exhibition in San Diego. The materials collected by A. Hrdlička and his team were added to the US National Museum (now the National Museum of Natural History in Washington) collection. These included cranial and osteological collections, anthropometric measurement forms, anthropological photographs, etc. A selection of ethnographic photographs taken by Hrdlička in Mongolia are stored in the Scientific Archives of the Institute of Anthropology and Ethnology of the Russian Academy of Sciences. Hrdlička sought to discover Americanoid anthropological types among the indigenous population of Siberia and hoped to meet personally the descendants of the Yeniseian-speaking peoples. He also assigned this task to his Russian colleagues. The article covers the history of the photographic materials ordered by A. Hrdlička for the exhibition from the Minusinsk photographer N. V. Fedorov in 1912. The correspondence between A. Hrdlička and Th.A. Fjelstrup in 1912–1927 covers aspects of international cooperation of scientists in laying the foundations for anthropological and ethnographic research, and highlights the contribution of Siberian regional historians. Recommendations from A. Hrdlička introduced the student Th. A. Fjelstrup to the circle of outstanding anthropologists and ethnographers, and the journey to Siberia and Mongolia had a great influence on his personality. Th. A. Fjelstrup chose ethnography as his profession, specialized in Turkology, dedicated much of his time to the field research and prepared Russian ethnographic expeditions to Central Asia in the 1920s and 1930s.

Keywords: *Aleš Hrdlička, Theodor A. Fjelstrup, photography, Siberia, Nikolai Vasilievich Fedorov*

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Original Article

© *Liudmila Nikonova, and Lyubov Shchankina*

THE HISTORY OF MORDVA RESETTLEMENT TO WESTERN SIBERIA IN THE SOVIET PERIOD

This article is devoted to the history of the migration of Mordovians to the territory of Western Siberia based on materials from the Central State Archive of the Republic of Mordovia and data from the ethnographic expedition of 2009. It is the first time that the history of the resettlement of the Mordovians to the West Siberian region during the years of Soviet power is being scientifically studied. It was revealed that this resettlement included planned relocations aimed at the development of new territories, as well as forced ones associated with repression. For many people, the resettlement was largely motivated by the various benefits provided to the peasants. Based on the analysis of archival and field materials in the resettlement movement, two main periods were identified: 1920–1930 — industrialization, collectivization; 1950–1960 — active formation of industrialized cities, the development of virgin and fallow lands. Isolated cases of Mordovian migration to Siberia were revealed to have occurred between 1970s and 1980s. These were motivated by personal reasons and seasonal work, as the mass programs to attract the population to new regions had already ceased by that time.

Keywords: *Western Siberia, Volga regions, Mordovians, immigrants, resettlement, resettlement policy*

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RESILIENCE OF SOCIAL HABITUS AS AN ADAPTATION FACTOR AMONG THE ETHNIC NOBILITY IN THE RUSSIAN EMPIRE (LATE 19TH — EARLY 20TH CENTURY): EVIDENCE FROM THE BIOGRAPHY OF K. F. BARANOVSKY

This article presents a study of the adaptation strategies employed by the Belarusian nobility during the turning point of socio-political transformations of the 20th century through the analysis of a single case study — reconstructing the biography of this class' representative. The study was conducted using biographical, historical, and comparative methods based on formal biographical and narrative sources and personal documents. Methodologically, the causes and consequences of the chosen adaptation strategies are analyzed within the framework of the institutional approach and field theory. It is noted that the range of adaptive behavior options of the Belarussian noble class is linked to the habitus of this social group. The author reveals the social aspects of its history, value orientations and traditions embedded in the disposition of this group's habitus. The revolutionary institutional structure of the 20th century led to frustration and social maladjustment among the Belarusian nobility. The behavioral strategies they implemented often resulted in a decline in quality of life, status, and economic position, and jeopardized their physical survival. One reason why irrational adaptation strategies were chosen by Belarusian nobles is the dialectical contradiction between the habitus dispositions internalized in other institutional conditions and the new institutional reality. In a situation of choice, this led to the dominance of tradition over rationality. The paper analyzes the habitus of the Belarusian nobility as a factor limiting the adaptive strategies of members of the class to the radically changed social environment. It also reveals the factors and conditions that contributed to the restoration of rational perception in the context of forced adaptation.

Keywords: *Belarusian nobility, Polish-Lithuanian gentry, habitus, adaptation, institutional transformations*

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Original article

© *Irina Vinokurova, and Elena Dubrovskaya*

DIALOGUE OF GENERATIONS IN THE SCIENTIFIC PATH OF KARELIAN HISTORIANS M. N. VLASOVA AND G. N. BOGDANOVA

This article is written in line with the developing in Russian science field of gender history, which allows us not only to examine the individual biographies of women scientists but also to identify the various ways of their entry into the profession. This issue remains understudied at the national and regional levels. This work examines the participation of the first representatives of the Karelian and Vepsian peoples in historical scholarship in Karelia by examining the biographies of two renowned researchers from this region: Maria N. Vlasova and Galina N. Bogdanova. This choice was motivated by the 100th anniversary of their births, celebrated in 2025. This study, drawing on an extensive corpus of biographical texts, including those from previously unknown family archives, utilized an intergenerational approach, allowing us to consider the professional development of women historians as the result of a dialogue between generations, encompassing both family relationships (“fathers and daughters”) and mentorship and apprenticeship, within a single historical era. It is concluded that the fate of the first female historians from the Karelians and Vepsians was largely predetermined by time, Soviet power and education, the Komsomol, the Party, as well as the example of their fathers and teachers — worthy representatives of the first generation of Soviet intellectuals who emerged from the working-class and peasant environment.

Keywords: *G. N. Bogdanova, M. N. Vlasova, Vepsians, Karelians, scientific biography, gender, history of Karelia*

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