



Ethnic Identity: Research by Central Asian Scientists

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ABSTRACT. *Globalization has changed some aspects of ethnic identity. On a theoretical basis, this article examines the analysis of studies of ethnic identity conducted by scientists in Central Asia. The maintenance and development of ethnic identity in the face of globalization and sociopolitical upheavals is the main topic of this study. Various research approaches to defining ethnic identity, the main stages of its formation, and the influence of political, historical, and sociocultural processes on the formation and change of ethnic identity are considered. Drawing upon research from diverse disciplines such as anthropology, political science, sociology, and psychology, the article delves into the complexities of ethnic identity formation, its significance, and its impact on individuals and communities. Using data from 17 scientific papers indexed by the keyword “ethnic identity” in the Scopus database, the article identifies key factors influencing the formation and understanding of ethnic identity. The author summarizes various approaches to the study of ethnicity, analyzes the factors affecting the formation of ethnic identity, and presents the main conclusions made by Central Asian researchers. Through a synthesis of empirical studies, theoretical frameworks, and case analyses, the article offers insights into the multifaceted nature of ethnic identity within the region. The article represents an important contribution to political science and cultural and sociological aspects of ethnic identity and can be used for further research. Our research reveals a significant interdependence between ethnic identity and historical-political contexts, showing how these factors shape contemporary social reality. Research findings underscore the value of viewing ethnic identity holistically and offer a paradigm for promoting social cohesiveness and cultural continuity in Central Asia.*

KEYWORDS: *ethnic identity, globalization, religious, language, ethnicity.*

INTRODUCTION

Ethnic identity is one of the key concepts in the social sciences. It represents a sense of belonging to a particular ethnic group, which is based on common cultural, linguistic, and historical traditions. In Central Asia, the study of ethnic identity is of particular importance since this region is one of the most multi-ethnic in the world. The diverse ethnic groups in this region, including Kazakhs, Kyrgyz, Tajiks, Turkmen, and Uzbeks, among others, have unique histories, cultures, and traditions that contribute to the complexities of ethnic identity formation.

Understanding ethnic identity in Central Asia requires a critical examination of nation-building, contemporary national identity, and post-Soviet studies. By examining how nations are imagined and constructed, Smith (1991) and Anderson (2016) have clarified the procedures involved in nation-building among multiethnic communities. Smith (2009) emphasizes how myths, recollections, and symbols influence national identity through his notion of ethno-symbolism. This is especially important in Central Asia, where historical narratives play a major role in national discourse. Because state-controlled media play a significant role in the development of national identities in many Central Asian countries, Anderson's concept of "imagined communities" reveals this process.

The study of "Ethnicity without groups" by Brubaker (2006) highlights how political elites play a decisive role in forming ethnic identities as well as how ethnic boundaries are fluid. This viewpoint is particularly important in Central Asia, where elite discourses and governmental actions have a big impact on how ethnic identities are constructed. Marat's (2018) research on reforms state-building in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan highlights the impact of historical legacies and external influences on national identity formation. Marat argues that the interplay between Soviet-era policies and contemporary nation-building efforts has created a unique national identity that blends civic and ethnic elements. Such insights are valuable for understanding the broader patterns of ethnic identity in the region.

The topic of ethnic identity has been studied widely throughout the world, and academics like Clifford Geertz, Stuart Hall, and Rogers Brubaker have made important contributions, in our judgment. A theoretical framework for investigating ethnic identity in Central Asia is established by their research on nationalism, ethnic identity construction, and cultural interpretation. Geertz's (1973) interpretive approach to culture provides insights into how ethnic identities are symbolically constructed and maintained. Hall's (1996, pp. 110-121) work on cultural identity emphasizes the fluid and constructed nature of identities, which is pertinent in the dynamic, multi-ethnic societies of Central Asia. Brubaker's (2002) concept of "groupism" challenges the notion of fixed ethnic groups and highlights the contextuality of ethnic identities, a perspective particularly relevant for understanding Central Asia's diverse populations.

Besides, the impact of Soviet-era policies on ethnic relations (Torun, 2021), the significance of language and education in the creation of identity (Fierman, 2006), and the impact of regional geopolitics (Bayarkhuu, 2004) on interethnic development have been the main topics of research on ethnic identity in Central Asia. Soviet policies, such as the promotion of Russian and the establishment of ethnically defined administrative boundaries, have had lasting effects on ethnic identities in the region (Hirsch, 2000).

Post-Soviet transitions have complicated interethnic development as newly independent states grapple with the legacy of Soviet rule while attempting to forge new ethnic identities. Dave's (2007) research on Kazakhstan's nation-building strategies illustrates

how the government promotes Kazakh language and culture to strengthen national identity while managing ethnic diversity. Similarly, Reeves' (2014) work on Kyrgyzstan highlights the role of political and social changes in shaping ethnic identities and interethnic relations.

Faranda and Nolle's (2011) study delves into the intricacies of ethnic identity in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, particularly examining the perceptions of both titular and Russian populations regarding ethnic communities. The findings of their research suggest that ethnic boundaries are not rigid or universally defined but rather fluid and context-dependent. By demonstrating the variability and context-dependence of ethnic boundaries, their study contributes to a deeper understanding of how individuals and communities perceive and define their own identities within multiethnic societies like Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan.

Shnirelman's (2012, pp. 15-36) study provides insights into the intricate relationship between nationhood, identity, political authority, material culture, and the built environment throughout Eurasian history. Specifically, he emphasizes the significance of archaeology in shaping ethnic identity in Central Asia. According to Shnirelman, the historical dynamics of power exert a crucial influence on the development of the "national idea" within this context. By examining the material remnants of past civilizations, archaeology contributes to the construction of narratives surrounding ethnic identity. The interpretation of archaeological findings often intersects with political agendas and power dynamics, shaping the collective understanding of history and identity. The historicity of power - exhibited via invasions, territorial domination, and cultural assimilation - plays a crucial role in forming ideas of nationhood and ethnic identity in Central Asia, a region where many cultures and civilizations have interacted for millennia. Shnirelman's argument underscores the difficult interaction between historical narratives, archaeological evidence, and the construction of ethnic identity. By acknowledging the influence of political authority and power dynamics on the formation of the "national idea", his study highlights the multidimensional nature of identity formation in Eurasian history.

Lubin's (2023, pp. 53-70) rationale underscores the complexity of identities in Central Asia, highlighting how ethnic, religious, and cultural identities intersect and influence each other. By emphasizing the fluidity and context-dependency of identities in the region, he suggests that they cannot be neatly compartmentalized in analysis. This fluidity implies that identities can shift and adapt based on various factors, making their role in domestic and foreign policy ambiguous and subject to interpretation. Understanding this complexity is critical to this study's efforts to understand Central Asian scientists research on ethnic identity.

Kazakhstani scientists have approached the study of ethnic identity from multiple perspectives. Anthropological studies by domestic scientists have focused on the historical roots and cultural practices that shape ethnic identity in the region (Baigabatova et al.,

2018; Boivin, 2015; Nurgaliyeva et al., 2017). Sociological studies have examined the social structures and processes that influence ethnic identity formation and maintenance (Kappassova, 2018; Otpenov et al., 2019; Yefremov, 2021). Additionally, educational and psychological studies have examined multicultural educational experiences and psychological factors that contribute to ethnic identity (Fahrutdinova et al., 2023; Mukhamejanova & Konurbayeva, 2023).

With the use of the “Article title, Abstract, Keywords” and “Article title” capabilities in the Scopus database, you can find out how many works have been published by scientists from Central Asia by using the keyword “ethnic identity” (Table 1). These findings, in our opinion, demonstrate the degree to which Central Asian scientists value this idea and the depth of research that has been done on the subject.

Table 1. *Number of published works by Central Asian scientists using the proposed keyword*

Central Asian countries	Article title, Abstract, Keywords (found materials – 11 272)	Article title (found materials – 2 580)
Kazakhstan	52	7
Kyrgyzstan	6	-
Tajikistan	2	-
Turkmenistan	-	-
Uzbekistan	2	-

Data collected by the author using the Scopus database (accessed March 1, 2024).

This study aims to analyze the research conducted by Central Asian scientists on issues of ethnic identity within the framework of interdisciplinary connections, incorporating perspectives from political science, history, anthropology, cultural studies, and sociology. By synthesizing existing scientific knowledge and empirical evidence, we set out to explain the complex processes underlying the formation, maintenance, and change of ethnic identity in different contexts. Through this effort, we hope to contribute to a greater understanding of the complexities inherent in ethnic identity and its implications for contemporary society. However, several limitations must be acknowledged to clarify the scope and ensure a more accurate and context-sensitive analysis.

Focused on publications from the Scopus database: the research is specifically limited to Central Asian scientists who published articles in journals from the Scopus database. The rationale for sampling is written in the research methodology section.

Language and accessibility: much of the research analyzed is published in English. We analyzed two publications published in Russian. The scientific literature selected during the processing of primary data is indicated in Appendix 1. A few closed access articles were taken into consideration in addition to open access ones.

Ethnic identity complexity: ethnic identity is inherently complex and intersects with other social identities such as cultural identity, nation, religion, language, belonging, and class. While acknowledging these intersects, the primary analytical category in this study is ethnic identity. Because of this approach, overlapping identities that could offer a more comprehensive understanding of the social forces at work are not thoroughly examined.

Contextual sensitivity: the study recognizes that ethnic identities cannot be equated across different nations, as each represents a distinct identity shaped by unique historical, cultural, and political contexts. Therefore, findings and conclusions drawn from one country may not be directly applicable to another. This limitation necessitates careful contextualization and caution in making broader generalizations.

Data limitations: since this study examines on a theoretical basis the analysis of ethnic identity research, the study relies on existing research and secondary data sources. Primary data collection, such as interviews or ethnographic fieldwork, was not conducted as part of this analysis.

By acknowledging these limitations, this study aims to provide a clear and context-sensitive analysis conducted by Central Asian scientists. Establishing these boundaries helps clarify the scope of the research and ensures that the conclusions drawn are both accurate and relevant to the specific contexts being studied.

Key terms and specialized vocabulary used in this study include: ethnicity: a sense of belonging to a particular ethnic group, often defined by shared cultural practices, language, and ancestry; ethnic identity: a feeling of being a member of a specific ethnic group, typically indicated by common ancestry, language, and cultural customs; globalization: globalization affects ethnic identities by increasing cultural exchange and intensifying ethnic awareness; religion: a significant cultural and social force that shapes ethnic identities and community structures; language: the promotion of national languages is a critical factor in the region's ethnic development.

Based on the foregoing, in this article, the author aims to analyze studies of ethnic identity conducted by scientists in Central Asia. To do this, the following questions will be considered:

- (1) What approaches to the study of ethnic identity are used by Central Asian scientists?
- (2) What factors, according to Central Asian researchers, influence the formation of ethnic identity?
- (3) What are the main conclusions made by Central Asian researchers in the field of studying ethnic identity?

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

As noted above, the primary data of the research work was obtained using the “Article title, Abstract, Keywords” and “Article title” functions from the Scopus database. The results obtained using “Article title” for scientists in Kazakhstan and “Article title, Abstract, Keywords” for scientists from Tajikistan and Uzbekistan were analyzed (Table 1). We explain the restriction created for Kazakh scientists by the large number of materials found under “Article title, Abstract, Keywords”. Systematizing the found materials using the keyword “ethnic identity”, in this study we paid attention to 17 scientific works (Appendix 1). It is important to note that scientists from Central Asia have collaborated with researchers from other nations on a number of their papers.

Several analytical methods were used to analyze the studies found during the primary data collection process and obtain information about ethnic identity, including (1) theoretical and empirical synthesis, (2) analysis of scientific literature, (3) comparative analysis, and (4) generalization. (1) Theoretical and empirical synthesis involves synthesizing both theoretical frameworks and empirical evidence from various sources to develop a comprehensive understanding of ethnic identity. By integrating existing theories and concepts with real data, the author of the article created a holistic analytical structure for the study. (2) The analysis of scientific literature involves analyzing relevant scientific literature to gather insights, theories, and findings related to ethnic identity. This involves reviewing academic papers and books to identify trends, debates, and gaps in the existing literature. (3) Comparative analysis involves examining similarities and differences across different cases and contexts related to ethnic identity. We compared different ethnic groups, regions, historical periods, and socio-political environments in Central Asia to identify patterns, variations, and factors influencing the formation and expression of ethnic identity. (4) Generalization involves drawing overarching conclusions and principles based on the analysis of specific cases and data. Generalizing the results of empirical research and comparative analysis, we were able to draw our own conclusions about the nature and consequences of ethnic identity in various contexts.

Explanations of the research methodology application:

Application of theoretical and empirical synthesis: to develop a comprehensive understanding of ethnic identity, we integrated both theoretical frameworks and empirical evidence. We created a comprehensive analytical framework that spanned the gap between theoretical viewpoints and empirical facts by combining ideas and concepts from various sources. The intersection of theoretical models of ethnic identity formation with case studies by Central Asian scientists created an analytical framework that informed the entire study.

Application of analysis of scientific literature: this process involved systematically searching for and analyzing relevant academic papers, books, and other scholarly sources

in the Scopus database. Examining the literature turned up important discoveries, theoretical disagreements, and gaps in the field's knowledge. This methodology provided a foundation for understanding the current state of knowledge on ethnic identity and highlighted areas that required further exploration. The direction of this research was determined after separately detecting trends in the study of ethnic identity in the works of Central Asian scientists.

Application of comparative analysis: comparative analysis was a critical component of methodology, as it allowed for the examination of similarities and differences across various cases and contexts. We compared different publications by Central Asian scientists that determined patterns and factors of ethnic identity in Central Asia. This method helped to uncover factors that influence ethnic identity, such as migration, economic changes, cultural policies, etc.

Application of generalization: after conducting theoretical research using analytical methods, we drew overarching conclusions and principles about ethnic identity based on research by Central Asian scientists. In order to create a broader that could be used in different situations, generalization required combining the research and data from scientists from Central Asia. For instance, based on our analysis, we generalized that economic development and political stability play significant roles in shaping ethnic identity in Central Asia. These generalizations helped to establish theoretical findings that can be investigated in further studies and gave insight into the nature and implications of ethnic identity.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

RESEARCH BY KAZAKHSTANI SCIENTISTS

Kazakhstan scientists are actively researching various aspects of ethnic identity, which are determined by the multinational nature of the country and the dynamic processes of ethnocultural development. Their comprehensive approach reflects the complexity and multifaceted nature of ethnic identity, which is shaped by historical, cultural, social, political, and individual factors.

Researchers have examined how cultural policies influence the restoration and preservation of ethnic identity. The ethnic identity of Kazakhstani Russians has been a subject of interest, exploring how they navigate their dual cultural heritage and interact with the dominant Kazakh culture. Studies have looked at the role of Catholicism among ethnic minorities in Kazakhstan and its influence on their ethnic identity. The importance of language, especially for young people from interethnic families, has been studied to understand its role in shaping ethnic identity and cultural belonging. Researchers have explored how ethnic identity can be mobilized for political purposes, examining its role in political participation and activism. The impact of Kazakhstan cinema on the formation of cultural and ethnic identity has been studied to understand how films shape

perceptions of Kazakh culture, history, and values. The veneration of saints and local heroes, such as Genghisids and warrior-batyr, has been examined to understand its role in the generation of ethnic identity among Kazakhs in specific regions.

Kazakhstan scientists have employed various research methods and approaches, including qualitative research, cognitive anthropology, constructivist research, historical analysis, sociological surveys, symbolic research, case studies, and historiographic research. These diverse approaches allow researchers to explore ethnic identity from multiple perspectives, incorporating insights from history, policy, culture, psychology, sociology, and anthropology.

Overall, the studies conducted by Kazakhstani scientists provide a rich and nuanced understanding of ethnic identity, highlighting its complex nature. By exploring various aspects of ethnic identity and employing diverse research methods, Kazakhstan scientists contribute to a deeper understanding of the factors that shape ethnic identity in Kazakhstan and beyond. Their research underscores the importance of considering multiple factors and perspectives when studying ethnic identity and highlights the need for interdisciplinary approaches to this complex phenomenon.

Cultural policy plays a pivotal role in the restoration and preservation of ethnic identity. Myong and Chun (2015) delve into the practice of street renaming as a strategic approach to express and reinforce ethnic identity. Their study specifically examines the impact of renaming streets in Almaty, focusing on how this practice contributes to the preservation of historical memory and the creation of a new public space aligned with the values and ideals of the ethnic group. Street renaming serves as a visible and enduring form of cultural expression. By renaming streets with names that resonate with the cultural heritage and history of the community, a sense of belonging and connection is fostered among the residents. One of the significant outcomes of street renaming is the preservation of historical memory. Renaming streets with names that have historical significance to the ethnic group helps in keeping alive the stories, struggles, and achievements of the community's ancestors. This act of commemoration through street names serves as a constant reminder of the rich heritage and contributions of the ethnic group to the broader societal tapestry. Furthermore, renaming streets aligns the public space more closely with the values and ideals of the ethnic group. Choosing names that reflect the cultural, social, and political values of the community, the public area becomes a symbol of identity and pride. This transformation of public spaces fosters a sense of ownership and belonging among the residents, encouraging active participation in community activities and initiatives.

Sengirbay (2019) conducted a comprehensive study to explore the intricate relationship between language and ethnicity among Kazakhstani Russians. By employing observation, semi-structured interviews, cognitive anthropology, and case studies, the research offers valuable insights into how language influences people's conceptions of their ethnicity. Language serves as more than just a means of communication; it

acts as a powerful cultural identifier. Senggirbay (2019) discovered that one crucial determinant of ethnic identity is the continued significance of the Kazakh language in shaping the ethnic identity of the diaspora. Speaking Kazakh to people of the diaspora is still a significant means for people to express their ethnic consciousness and to reaffirm their sense of ethnic identity. Language significantly influences people's internal self-perception of their ethnicity. Speaking Kazakh can evoke feelings of pride, identity, and cultural continuity among the diaspora population. Moreover, the ability to speak the Kazakh language fluently is seen as a key indicator of preserving it with friends. Externally, the use of the Kazakh language serves as a clear marker of ethnic identity, facilitating recognition and differentiation from other ethnic groups.

The weakening and liquidation of religious institutions during the Soviet period posed significant challenges to the preservation of religious practices and beliefs. However, religion persisted and thrived in the spaces of family and individual religiosity. In-depth analysis of the significant influence of Catholicism on the lives of Polish deportees to Kazakhstan is provided by Shapoval (2020), who shows how, in the face of deportation, faith became a vital survival tactic and a pillar for maintaining ethnic identity. In conditions of deportation, where individuals are forcibly separated from their homeland, culture, and community, faith emerges as a beacon of hope and comfort. For deportees, religion played a decisive role in their survival by providing spiritual sustenance, resilience, and a sense of purpose amidst adversity. The practice of faith offered emotional and psychological support, helping individuals cope with the challenges of displacement and uncertainty. Religious communities serve as vital social support networks, offering assistance, solidarity, and a sense of belonging to those in need. These religious communities played a pivotal role in mitigating the social and psychological impacts of deportation, fostering resilience and mutual aid among the displaced population. Religious traditions and rituals serve as powerful tools for preserving one's cultural identity in exile. Religious ceremonies, and rituals provided opportunities for cultural expression, storytelling, and passing down traditions to younger generations, thereby ensuring the continuity and preservation of their ethnic identity. Furthermore, faith acts as a unifying force that helps maintain a sense of community among the deported. Faith fostered a strong sense of solidarity, mutual support, and shared identity among the displaced population. Despite the challenges of deportation and displacement, the shared faith created bonds of unity and cohesion, reinforcing a collective sense of belonging and community. By offering comfort in the face of deportation, highlighting the tenacity of faith in trying times and its crucial role in maintaining ethnic identity, faith builds communities.

The study by Rakhmetova et al. (2022) found that language plays a crucial role in shaping the ethnic identity of young people and that their ability to speak the Kazakh language fluently is a key factor in their sense of belonging to the Kazakh ethnic group. Language serves not only as a means of communication but also as a repository of cultural heritage, values, and identity. For many young people, fluency in the Kazakh language is not just a skill but also a connection to their roots, family history, and cultural

heritage. It provides them with a sense of continuity and belonging to the broader Kazakh community. The study's findings emphasize that language proficiency since childhood is a crucial parameter of a linguistic personality. Early exposure to and proficiency in the Kazakh language can foster a deeper understanding and appreciation of Kazakh culture, traditions, and values, thereby reinforcing ethnic identity. Furthermore, the dominant role of the Kazakh language in society and its importance in professional career prospects indicate that language proficiency has practical implications beyond personal identity. It can also influence social integration, educational attainment, and economic opportunities for young people. The alignment between linguistic and ethnic identities for a majority of respondents (87%) underscores the close relationship between language and ethnic identity. This suggests that for many young Kazakhstanis, their ability to speak the Kazakh language fluently is not just a reflection of their linguistic skills but also a manifestation of their ethnic identity.

According to Czuba (2023), layered ethnic identity in Central Asia is an underappreciated feature of ethnicity and has its own political consequences. Layered ethnic identity in Central Asia brings attention to the complexity and diversity of ethnic identities in the region. Central Asia is home to many ethnic groups, languages, cultures, and histories that have interacted and evolved over centuries. As a result, many individuals in this region navigate multiple layers of ethnic identity, which can include national, regional, linguistic, tribal, or even clan affiliations, among others. Czuba's (2023) observation that layered ethnic identity has its own political consequences is particularly significant. In a region where ethnicity often intersects with politics, governance, and nation-building, the complexities of layered identity can influence political development in various ways.

Firstly, layered ethnic identity can impact political mobilization and representation. Individuals may align with different ethnic and regional groups based on context, leading to diverse political affiliations and alliances. This can contribute to a more fragmented political development where multiple ethnic groups and identities vie for representation and influence.

Secondly, the recognition and accommodation of layered ethnic identities can have implications for state policies, including those related to minority rights, cultural preservation, and language promotion. Governments may face challenges in balancing the diverse needs and interests of various ethnic groups, especially in multiethnic states where one dominant group may hold more political power.

Thirdly, layered ethnic identity can also influence interethnic relations and social cohesion. While shared cultural heritage and linguistic ties can foster unity and mutual understanding among different ethnic groups, differences in identity lead to tensions, conflicts, and divisions.

Moreover, external factors such as geopolitical interests, international migration, and global cultural influences can further complicate the situation of ethnic

identity in Central Asia, adding another layer of complexity to the region's political development. Recognizing the complexities of layered ethnic identity can contribute to equitable political processes, policies, and interethnic relations in Central Asia.

In today's globalized world, where cultures are constantly interacting and influencing each other, cinema has emerged as a powerful tool for shaping and transmitting ethnic identity. Therefore, it is important to consider the role of Kazakhstan cinema in the formation of ethnic identity (Matkerim et al., 2023). Kazakhstan cinema has a long history, dating back to the early 20th century. Over the years, it has produced a diverse range of films that have shown themes of Kazakh history, culture, and identity. These films have not only entertained audiences but have also served to educate and inform them about the Kazakh way of life. Kazakhstan cinema has also played a role in promoting the Kazakh language and culture. Many Kazakh films are made in the Kazakh language, and they often feature traditional Kazakh music, dance, and costumes. This exposure to Kazakh culture has helped to strengthen the identity of Kazakh people, both within Kazakhstan and abroad. Overall, Kazakhstan cinema has played a vital role in shaping and transmitting ethnic identity. It has helped to create a sense of national pride and unity among Kazakh people, and it has promoted the Kazakh language and culture to a global audience. As the industry continues to develop, Kazakhstan cinema is sure to play an even more important role in the future of Kazakhstan.

The adoration of saints, especially Genghisids, warrior-batyr, and charismatic tribal leaders, is a fascinating way to understand the distinctive features of ethnic identity creation in the North Kazakhstan region. This is especially true among Kazakhs. This form of saint worship, which differs from mainstream Islamic practices, reflects the region's historical, cultural, and social context, as well as its complex relationship with neighboring ethnic groups (Kaziev et al., 2023). In a region marked by constant hostility and distrust towards neighboring ethnic communities, the choice of Genghisids, warrior-batyr, and tribal leaders as objects of veneration is significant. These figures represent strength, leadership, and resilience, qualities that resonate with the local population and symbolize the region's history of resistance and autonomy. The cult of local saints, known as batyr-auwliye, serves as an important integrative force within the community. By venerating these figures, local Kazakhs reinforce tribal principles and values, fostering a sense of unity, identity, and belonging among community members. This form of saint worship not only strengthens social cohesion but also contributes to the deep ethnicization of tribal principles, shaping the collective identity of the local Kazakh population. Furthermore, the cult of batyr-auwliye reflects a syncretic blend of Islamic and pre-Islamic beliefs and practices. This blend of religious and cultural elements highlights the adaptive nature of religious practices and their ability to evolve and accommodate local customs, beliefs, and values over time. It also underscores the resilience and flexibility of ethnic identity, which can incorporate diverse influences while maintaining its core principles and values.

Considering the research of Kazakhstani scientists, we offer some proposals on the problems of ethnic identity in the country. Development and implementation of comprehensive language education programs stimulate proficiency in native languages from an early age. These programs should be integrated into the national education system to reinforce cultural heritage and ethnic identity among younger generations. We need to provide support to religious and cultural institutions that play a defining role in maintaining ethnic identity. This includes funding, legal protection, and community development initiatives that help preserve religious practices and cultural traditions. Power should recognize the complexity of ethnic identities and incorporate this understanding into state policies. To achieve balanced governance and societal harmony, this entails supporting minority rights, cultural preservation, and equitable representation. Investment in the local film industry to produce and distribute films that highlight the cultural heritage, history, and values of various ethnic groups promotes ethnic identity. Cinema can be a powerful tool for cultural education and international cultural diplomacy, promoting a positive image of the nation's diverse identities.

RESEARCH BY KYRGYZSTAN SCIENTISTS

Kyrgyz scientists have shown a deep commitment to understanding the complexities of ethnic identity, addressing a range of issues that are both relevant to Kyrgyzstan and resonate with broader global concerns. Research by Kyrgyzstan scientists concerns the concept of “kyrgyzchylyk” (Kyrgyzness), the life of migrants in Russia, the Russian language in the context of ethno-regional differences, the influence of conservative ideas, the transformation of consciousness in the context of globalization, and the study of the epic heritage.

Their research reflects a multifaceted approach, employing various methodologies and perspectives to explore the problems of ethnic identity in a rapidly changing world. Researchers employ a systemic approach to understand the interconnectedness of various factors influencing ethnic identity, considering social, cultural, historical, and economic dimensions. Ethnographic studies provide rich, qualitative insights into the lived experiences, practices, and beliefs of Kyrgyz people, offering a deep understanding of their cultural identity. Cognitive mapping helps researchers visualize and analyze the mental representations and perceptions of ethnic identity among individuals and communities. Surveys and thematic research allow researchers to collect and analyze quantitative data on attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors related to ethnic identity. Philosophical and comprehensive research approaches enable researchers to explore the underlying philosophical principles, values, and worldviews that shape ethnic identity, offering a holistic understanding of the subject. The variety of research approaches used by Kyrgyz scientists highlights the comprehensiveness of their approach. With this combination, they are able to collect information from several angles and create a more comprehensive image of Kyrgyz identity.

The concept of “kyrgyzchylyk” (Kyrgyzness) is an interesting and multifaceted term that encompasses various aspects of Kyrgyz identity, culture, and spirituality. Rooted in the historical and cultural experiences of the Kyrgyz people, it serves as a means of navigating the complexities of the past, particularly the Soviet era, while also emphasizing Islamic values and correct thinking (Aitpaeva, 2008). The Kyrgyz people, like many other Central Asian ethnic groups, experienced significant transformations during the Soviet era. The Soviet regime imposed its own cultural and ideological framework, which often clashed with traditional Kyrgyz values and practices. “Kyrgyzchylyk” can be seen as a way to reconcile and make sense of this complex history, allowing Kyrgyz people to maintain a connection with their past while moving forward. Islam has played a crucial role in shaping the cultural and spiritual identity of the Kyrgyz people. We think “kyrgyzchylyk” incorporates Islamic teachings and principles, providing a moral and spiritual foundation for the community. This Islamic influence can be seen in various aspects of Kyrgyz life, from daily practices to cultural traditions. The concept of “correct thinking” within “kyrgyzchylyk” emphasizes rationality, wisdom, and a balanced approach to life. It encourages individuals to think critically, make informed decisions, and act responsibly. This aspect of “kyrgyzchylyk” reflects the importance of intellectual and moral integrity in shaping the identity of the Kyrgyz people.

Nasritdinov’s (2016) research provides important insights into the chances and difficulties of migrant integration in Russia. It focuses on Central Asian migrants and their relationships with locals in Kazan and Saint Petersburg. In contrast to pushing for assimilation or developing supra-ethnic identities, the author’s viewpoint highlights the need of accepting variety and building mutual understanding. One of the key arguments put forward by Nasritdinov is that successful migrant integration requires an acceptance and appreciation of cultural, linguistic, and religious differences. Instead of expecting migrants to conform to the dominant culture or adopt a homogeneous identity, there needs to be a recognition and respect for the diversity that migrants bring. This approach fosters a harmonious society where individuals from different backgrounds can coexist peacefully. Nasritdinov criticizes policies that aim to Russify migrants, as these can be counterproductive and lead to feelings of exclusion. Forced assimilation can undermine migrants’ cultural identities and hinder their integration into society. Instead, policies should focus on creating an environment that values and accommodates diversity, allowing migrants to maintain their cultural heritage while also participating in the broader community. Similarly, the author cautions against the promotion of supra-ethnic identities as a solution to migrant integration. While such identities can provide a sense of belonging and solidarity among migrants, they can also contribute to divisions between different ethnic and cultural groups.

The study by Agadjanian and Nedoluzhko (2022) offers an intriguing perspective on the relationship between ethnic heterogeneity, proficiency in the Russian language, and labor market outcomes in Kyrgyzstan. Their findings refute prevailing knowledge and provide insight into the intricate processes at work in a multiethnic community. One of the key findings of the study is that proficiency and use of the Russian language tend to

increase as the ethnic heterogeneity of the community rises. This suggests that in more ethnically diverse settings, individuals are more likely to learn and use Russian as a common language for communication. Interestingly, despite the increasing proficiency in the Russian language, the authors did not find a strong perception among respondents regarding the importance of Russian language skills for success in the domestic labor market. This finding is surprising given that Russian is often considered an important language for economic and professional advancement in many post-Soviet countries.

Abdoubaetova's study in 2023 (Abdoubaetova, 2023) presents a perspective on the growing influence of conservative ideas promoted by Kyrgyz-speaking illiberal public activists. Her argument revolves around the confluence of re-traditionalization, the resurgence of religious values, and anti-Western sentiments as key factors driving this trend. The process of re-traditionalization refers to a return and re-emphasis on traditional cultural, social, and moral values. In the context of Kyrgyzstan, this could mean a renewed focus on traditional customs, practices, and norms, which may be perceived as being under threat due to modernization, globalization, and external influences. Alongside re-traditionalization, Abdoubaetova highlights the growing influence of religious values in shaping public discourse and activism. Religion can serve as a powerful force in mobilizing individuals and communities around shared beliefs and principles. In the case of Kyrgyz-speaking illiberal activists, religious values may provide a moral and ideological framework for their conservative ideas and actions. Anti-Western sentiments can be seen as a reaction against perceived Western cultural, political, and economic influences. For some, the West may be seen as a threat to traditional values, national identity, and sovereignty, leading to a rejection of Western ideologies and practices. The promotion of conservative ideas by Kyrgyz-speaking illiberal public activists has implications for public discourse, political mobilization, and social dynamics in Kyrgyzstan. It can shape the narrative around issues such as gender roles, family values, national identity, and foreign policy.

The research by Botokanova, Alybaev, and Mursahmedova (2024) illuminates, in the context of globalization, the opportunities and difficulties experienced by post-nomadic peoples in the Kyrgyz Republic. According to their results, cultural identity is still crucial for successful adaptation to contemporary living situations, even if globalization has had a substantial impact on the traditions, culture, ideology, and identity of nomadic and post-nomadic peoples. Globalization has brought about profound changes in various aspects of life, including culture, economy, and technology. For nomadic and post-nomadic peoples, these changes can pose challenges to their traditional ways of life, cultural practices, and identity. The loss of traditional characteristics due to globalization can lead to feelings of cultural dislocation and identity crises. We are thinking that cultural identity serves as a source of resilience, cohesion, and meaning, providing individuals and communities with a sense of belonging, continuity, and purpose. The researchers contend that unique advancements that tastefully blend traditions and innovations are essential to maintaining ethnic identity in the face of globalization. This method embraces the chances and advantages provided by modernization and technical

breakthroughs while simultaneously acknowledging the importance of traditional knowledge, customs, and values. Therefore, it can be argued that by embracing both the richness of their cultural heritage and the opportunities of modernization, post-nomadic communities can navigate the challenges of globalization while maintaining a strong sense of identity, belonging, and continuity.

The study of the epic heritage of ethnic groups, which plays a significant role in preserving their ethnic identity and original socio-cultural space, faces challenges in the era of globalization (Murzakhmedova et al., 2024). As globalization progresses, doubts arise regarding the preservation of this heritage due to several factors. Firstly, globalization often brings about a homogenizing effect, where diverse cultural expressions, including epic heritage, may be overshadowed in favor of more standardized, globally accepted norms and values. This standardization and unification of societal aspects can erode the uniqueness and distinctiveness of ethnic identities and their cultural expressions. Secondly, the rapid spread of technology and media platforms facilitated by globalization can lead to the dominance of mainstream, commercialized cultural products over traditional forms of expression such as epic poetry. As a result, there may be less space and attention given to the preservation and transmission of epic heritage within ethnic communities. Thirdly, economic and social changes accompanying globalization can disrupt traditional ways of life and community structures, impacting the transmission and continuity of epic heritage across generations. Migration, urbanization, and changing employment patterns may lead to the dispersion of ethnic communities and a loss of connection to their cultural roots. Overall, the process of globalization raises questions about the resilience and sustainability of ethnic identities and their cultural heritage, including epic traditions. Efforts to address these challenges may involve promoting cultural diversity, supporting grassroots initiatives for cultural preservation, and fostering intercultural dialogue to ensure that ethnic groups can maintain their unique identities and cultural spaces in a globalized world.

Ethnic identity is an important tool for guiding one's future vision at the nexus of spirituality and culture. This viewpoint emphasizes how important it is to comprehend one's spiritual practices and ancestry. We can obtain understanding of our possible trajectories and the ideals that might direct us forward by thinking back on our spiritual beliefs and cultural heritage. But it's important to acknowledge that migrants face many difficulties in their daily lives as they frequently juggle many cultures and spiritual backgrounds. Resilience and flexibility are necessary to adjust to a new situation while maintaining one's cultural and spiritual identity. Language hurdles, cultural misunderstandings, and the effort to preserve a connection to their history in the face of assimilation pressures are just a few of the challenges that migrants commonly encounter. Additionally, speaking various languages becomes essential in our increasingly interconnected society. There might be impediments to communication and understanding as well as limited chances when someone just uses their mother tongue and neglects to acquire other languages. Because it has the potential to cut people off from larger social, economic, and cultural contacts, it is a harmful phenomenon.

Being multilingual promotes empathy and a respect for different cultures in addition to improving one's chances in both the personal and professional spheres. Therefore, it is critical to recognize the intricacies of migratory life and the significance of linguistic diversity, even as ethnic identification at the intersection of culture and spirituality might enlighten one's destiny. Accepting people from different languages and cultures opens doors to both individual development and greater communal harmony.

RESEARCH BY TAJIKISTAN AND UZBEKISTAN SCIENTISTS

Noticeably, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan scientists have more publications on the identified issues compared to Tajikistan and Uzbekistan scientists. We note that publications by Turkmenistan scientists using the keyword were not found.

Tajikistan scientists focus on dimensions of national identity, nationalism, and colonialism. They investigate the complexities of national identity formation, the impact of nationalism on society, and the historical legacies of colonialism in Central Asia. Tajikistan scientists employ correlation, factor, and conceptual research approaches. These approaches involve quantitative analyses, statistical modeling, and theoretical frameworks to explore the relationships between different variables and dimensions.

Uzbekistan scientists primarily focus on issues related to Central Asian refugees and the migration of nomads. They examine the historical context, socio-economic factors, and cultural implications of refugee movements and nomadic migrations in Central Asia. Uzbekistan scientists mainly use a historical research approach. This approach involves archival research, historical analysis, and the examination of primary sources to uncover patterns, trends, and dynamics related to refugee movements and nomadic migrations in Central Asia.

Gharibyan's (2015) model for measuring the degree of national identity among young people provides a structured framework to understand the multifaceted nature of ethnic identity. This model highlights several key dimensions that contribute to the formation and expression of national identity, particularly among the youth. If we delve deeper into these dimensions and their interrelationships, we can identify the following patterns:

Shared beliefs: this dimension refers to the common values, beliefs, and ideologies that members of an ethnic group share. Shared beliefs play a crucial role in shaping collective identity, providing a moral and ideological framework that binds individuals together.

Historical continuity: emphasizes the importance of a shared historical narrative and collective memory. A strong sense of historical continuity helps to anchor the identity of a group, providing a sense of continuity and connection with the past.

Active identity: refers to the active engagement and participation of individuals in expressing and shaping their ethnic identity. This dimension emphasizes the nature of

identity, highlighting the role of individual agency and collective action in defining and redefining identity over time.

Common land and location: the geographical dimension, including common land and location, plays a significant role in shaping ethnic identity. Shared geographical spaces and locations contribute to a sense of belonging and attachment to the land, reinforcing ethnic identity.

Shared social culture: encompasses the customs, traditions, rituals, and practices that define the social fabric of an ethnic group. Cultural expressions, such as language, arts, and music, play a vital role in reinforcing ethnic identity and fostering a sense of community among its members.

Relationships between dimensions:

Interconnectedness: shared beliefs, historical continuity, and active identity contribute to the formation of a common cultural and social framework, while common land and location serve as tangible manifestations of this shared identity.

The changing nature of ethnic identity: the changing nature of ethnic identity emphasizes the role of individual and collective agency in shaping and reshaping identity over time. This changing interplay between different dimensions allows for flexibility, adaptation, and the evolution of ethnic identity in response to changing social, cultural, and historical contexts.

Importance for young people: comprehending the diverse facets of national identification can aid young people in the development of a comprehensive comprehension of ethnic identity, cultivating a feeling of belonging, self-worth, and affinity with their cultural legacy.

Nationalism and colonialism have a complex and intertwined relationship with ethnic identity. Khomyakov's (2020) argument aligns with the idea that some forms of modern nationalism see expansion and dominance as inherent. This can fuel colonialism, which often relies on portraying colonized people as inferior based on ethnicity. In our opinion, nationalism can solidify a sense of shared ethnicity by emphasizing a common history, language, and culture. This can be a force for unity against perceived external threats. It can also be used to create a sense of "us vs. them" mentality, marginalizing and even oppressing ethnic minorities within a nation. Colonial powers often imposed artificial boundaries and administrative systems, grouping together disparate ethnicities under a single colonial state. This could lead to a sense of shared identity under colonial rule. Colonial powers sometimes exploited existing ethnic divisions to maintain control, leading to lasting tensions in post-colonial states. Ethnic groups can use nationalism to resist colonialism and define their own identity on their own terms.

The migration of Uzbek and Uighur refugees to Saudi Arabia in the aftermath of the collapse of the USSR is a significant chapter in the history of these communities, impacting their cultural, religious, and ethnic identities. Balci (2007) provides insight into the intricate processes of identity formation and transformation among diaspora communities, arguing that most of these refugees abandoned mystical Islamic traditions in Central Asia in favor of Saudi religious traditions and helped reislamize their countrymen. Migration often entails cultural and religious adaptation as individuals and communities navigate new social, cultural, and political conditions. The experience of Uzbek and Uighur refugees in Saudi Arabia led to significant shifts in religious practices, beliefs, and affiliations, as they adapted to their new environment and interacted with Saudi religious traditions. Saudi Arabia, with its Wahhabi/Salafi Islamic traditions, represents a distinct religious and cultural context that differs from the typically Central Asian mystical Islamic traditions. Maybe the interaction between Uzbek and Uighur refugees and Saudi religious traditions contributed to the adoption of new religious practices, beliefs, and interpretations among these communities. The reislamization process among Uzbek and Uighur refugees can be seen as a form of identity reconfiguration, where religious identity becomes a central aspect of their ethnic and cultural identity. This reislamization not only impacted the refugees themselves but also had broader implications for their countrymen in Central Asia. Returning migrants often brought back new religious beliefs, practices, and ideologies, influencing the religious situation in their home countries.

Abdullaev (2012, pp. 73-98) suggests a strong connection between historical events and the migration patterns of nomadic tribes in Central Asia. The focus on nomadic tribes in Central Asia indicates the research is specific to a particular region with a rich history of nomadic movement. This suggests considering how the cultural background and sense of belonging of these tribes might have influenced their movements. Migration routes directly point to the nomadic lifestyle and the patterns of movement these tribes followed. Historical events played a significant role in shaping the migration patterns of nomadic tribes. This connection between historical events and migration makes sense. Nomadic movements could be driven by various factors influenced by historical events: war and conflict: nomadic tribes might have migrated to escape war and seek new territories after conquering others; trade and economic opportunities: changing trade routes and resource availability could have prompted movement; political shifts: the rise and fall of empires, or changes in political alliances, could have impacted migration patterns. We may understand the underlying patterns and reasons for nomadic migrations by looking at historical settings, which helps to clarify the intricate connection between these societies' movements and history.

Creating reliable models to gauge a population's level of ethnic identity is essential to comprehending and addressing the complexity of ethnic identity in the modern world. The degree to which people identify with their ethnic groups would be quantified with the use of these models, and this would have implications for social cohesion, policy formation, and cultural preservation. Through an examination of nationalism

and colonialism's histories, we reveal a complex political-historical relationship. As a reaction to colonialism, nationalism frequently emerged, attempting to defend native identities from foreign hegemony. This interaction has greatly influenced modern national identities and their customs, creating a lasting authority that still has an impact on the sociopolitical environments of today. The philosophies and religious beliefs of other nations present a special challenge in Central Asia. External religious influences have the ability to tear apart the historical and cultural fabric of the region, which could cause social unrest and instability. Therefore, preserving social stability and religious peace in Central Asian nations requires an understanding of and ability to manage these factors. Furthermore, historical occurrences have a significant influence on migratory trends. People have historically migrated due to political unrest, economic opportunities, wars, and environmental changes, which have had an impact on the demographic and cultural development of both their home nations and the countries they have moved to. Developing knowledgeable and humane immigration policies requires an understanding of these historical forces. It is critical to assess the impact of outside religious ideas, comprehend the complex relationships between nationalism and colonialism, quantify ethnic identity appropriately, and take the historical context of migration into account. Collectively, these elements influence the social and cultural development of communities in Central Asia. An all-encompassing approach to these problems can promote social cohesion, cultural preservation, and more efficient government.

CONCLUSION

The study of ethnic identity by Central Asian scientists reveals the intricate interplay of historical, cultural, and social factors that contribute to its formation and significance. While each ethnic group in the region has its unique identity, shared histories, languages, and cultural practices often intersect, fostering a sense of regional identity alongside ethnic ones.

Understanding ethnic identity in Central Asia is crucial for promoting intercultural dialogue, fostering social cohesion, and addressing the challenges of cultural diversity in the region. As Central Asian societies continue to evolve in the context of globalization and socio-political changes, further research on ethnic identity will remain vital to building harmonious societies.

This study highlights how important cultural policies, language ability, and religious practices are to maintaining ethnic identity in the face of globalization and sociopolitical change. We would like to draw attention to the significance of creating precise models to quantify ethnic identity, comprehending the relationship between nationalism and colonialism, and addressing the influence of foreign religious beliefs on the region in light of the findings of Central Asian scientists. In the future, it will be critical to support laws of tolerance and neighborhood-based programs that honor cultural variety and guarantee the resilience of ethnic identities in Central Asia. Through the integration of

these various aspects, the research offers a holistic framework for comprehending and maintaining ethnic identity in Central Asia, promoting social cohesiveness and cultural persistence in the face of modernization and globalization problems.

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