

Ritual as a Means of Intercultural Communication

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ABSTRACT

Rituals of different peoples of the contemporary world are presented in the article, perceived as a universal means of intercultural communication. The authors review some secular rituals of North America and religious ones of the Russian Caspian region. The coming-of-age ceremony of the North American Indian Apache community is submitted as a particular fulfillment of the contemporaneity's interethnic communications. The Apache's rite of passage attracts not only members of the Native American tribe but also the plethora of travelers worldwide. Special attention is paid to the analysis of the rituals in their function of integrating people of a particular ethnic culture and representatives of the others, participating in a ritual as spectators. The authors underline the humanistic and communicative traits of the rituals.

Keywords: *secular and religious rituals, life-cycle rituals, the Apache Sunrise ceremony, religious rituals of Russian Caspian region, indigenous tourism and intercultural communications*

I. INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary world, cross-cultural communications are being implemented on a global scale. Thus, an interaction and a dialogue with other people – representatives of different ethnic culture communities, confessions, denominations, and social groups – are impossible to perform within a personal self-enclosure. We assume that societies' and each human's openness towards the others is a prominent trait of the globalized world. In the 21st century, we are committed to mutual enrichment by knowledge, cultures, religious and secular ideas, scientific experience, and scholar achievements. Cultural diversity always presents within intercultural communications, especially nowadays.

There is a possibility for the appearance of both a reciprocal alienation of cultures and a dialogue of cultures in the global world. Human communication is a dialogue of differences. At the same time, to work out relationships, people must elaborate on some cross-cultural universals, mutually acceptable for a variety of people who, in their turn, are often extrinsic to each other. In the authors' opinion, not only ideas and

concepts can be considered as such shared universals, but some cultural and religious rituals may also bear the functions of such cross-cultural universals-values.

II. RITUAL AND ITS COMMUNICATIVE ROLE

Culture and religion execute the communicative function among groups of people and even nations in the contemporary world. Many people can interact, implement joint projects, and share their values and moral norms through religious and cross-cultural relations. In their turn, the rituals, lying in the base of many ethnic cultures, perform both the role of uniting one people – a bearer of the definite culture – as well as conveying their ethnical traditions and behavioral customs to other communities. In this context, it is not so important whether a ritual is a secular or religious one. Ritual per se is communicative in its entity, so it is usually held in that society's cultural space, which is initially ready for the members' ritualized interrelationship. Thus, ritual can be substantiated as one of the universal means of communication through which ethnic cultures transmit themselves to various communities.

Ritual and its preparatory actions ensure people's psychological and social integrity, with their participating in ritual activity, and serve a significant way for the foundation of cross-cultural relationships in the Global world. Rituals are referred to the shared

*Fund: The article has been prepared with the support of RUDN grant "Formation of the regional recreational system in the Caspian region as the main factor of sustainable development of the international tourism cluster" № 203207-0-000.

forms of behavior, which are to relate to something supernatural, even if it is only an imaginary image or phantom.

Rituals in their ideological content are classified into three categories – secular, religious, and mixed. The secular ones embrace, for instance, rites of age passage, or initiations of women and men, distinguishing from tribe to tribe, from community to community while being provided. There is Kikuyu initiation into adulthood in Kenya or Apache Female Puberty Sunrise Ceremony in the USA. Nevertheless, mentioned rituals are closely connected to these ethnic groups' historical legacy and even with the myths and legends, which have been initially incorporated into their genesis. Some societies hold a non-religious ritual of accepting a newborn baby into a community. Moreover, "Until the ceremony has been performed, the baby is not named and is not considered "human" [1]. In such cases, all the forms of ritualized behavior are not connected with a supernatural origin or any transcendental sphere.

Sometimes it is not easy to differentiate between religious and secular rituals because of a mixture of both sacral and civilian characteristics. Quite often, rituals reflect the development of an ethnic culture that also includes religious history. Therefore, religiosity and secularism are practically indefinable. Thus, American Thanksgiving Day is deep-rooted in its original mission to thank God for the survival of the puritan settlers, which had moved from Europe to the East coast of America and tackled many troubles. The holiday was initially tied with the cooking of sacral food, having that, each family gave appreciation to God for saving the pilgrims arriving in America with noble religious goals. However, the religious Christian origin of Thanksgiving Day is not sustained by everyone, even though they celebrate with a particularly prepared food (first of all, turkey). At present, Thanksgiving has broader, non-religious, significance. Moreover, Native Americans who have no intention to recognize the arriving and surviving of puritans as a solid reason to thank God or gods might reject the solely religious meaning of the holiday.

Cultural anthropologists and researchers of religions categorize the rituals, correlating them with diverse criteria. One of the typologies stands on the criteria of regular or irregular performing of the ceremonies. Regularly implemented rites are titled as periodical ones. Most of them are held annually, sometimes to mark a definite season of nature and related works, sowing, or harvesting, or celebrating an important social event.

The seasonal The First Salmon Ceremony of the American Indian tribe Upper Skagit Tribal Community,

located in Washington (USA)¹ [2] is very illustrative in this sense. After the long winter period, with the beginning of spring, the tribe gathers to celebrate the Day of Salmon. The fish prevails in their meal and usually supports the community to survive in severe winter conditions. At the same time, the ceremony represents the holiday of the first catch as a symbol of having further fish abundance and prosperity in the community's complicated life. While celebrating, the tribe elects the fisherman, endowing him a privilege to catch the first fish, and then the community will be eating it all together.

During cooking and eating, the community members speak with each other, reporting stories usually connected with the tribe's life and peculiarity of fishing activities. Legends and myths are circulating at that time, but all the tribe's people stress a considerable significance of the sharing a lunch from the first catch. Eventually, the ritual is finishing by salmon's entrails seeing off, being put on the fern mat, down a river stream that flows to the sea. The book "Native Heritage", devoted to North America aborigines' traditions and rituals, includes a story of Andy Fernando – the former chairman of this community – ultimately revealing the ceremony. He underlines its importance by writing the following: "The villagers and the salmon had fulfilled their duty, prescribed by the Great Spirit. The salmon had returned to the appointed time and place; the villagers had faithfully honored the salmon in sharing and ceremony. The people thereby assured themselves of a good season, and the harvest would begin" [3].

In our opinion, the ritual's principal value is in bringing the tribe's members together for the implementation of the definite actions that, as people believe in, will be helping them in the severe natural conditions. The ceremony unites people, giving confidence for further peaceful and prosperous existence.

Religious rituals can also be fulfilled annually or periodically. They are celebrated in every world's religion, marking special doctrine holidays or important sacral events. For instance, in Buddhism, it is Visakha Puja or Buddha's Day that epitomizes the birth, enlightenment, and the death of the Buddha. On that day, Buddhism adherents meet in the monasteries, listening to the special services, and conducting ritualized activities (as a case, spilling water over pictures of Buddha).

¹ The Upper Skagit Indian Tribe is a federally recognized Indian Tribe with a membership of 238. Its reservation includes lands located northeast of Sedro-Woolley, and between Burlington and the community of Alger. The tribe's traditional lands extended along the Skagit River between present-day Mount Vernon in the West, Newhalem in neighboring Whatcom County to the East, and the Baker and Sauk Rivers.

There exists another classification realizing as non-periodical rites. They are held sporadically, usually as a response to unexpected events, social or natural (wedding, birth, drought, or flood, etc.).

III. LIFE-CYCLE RITUAL AS A MEANS OF CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATIONS

Rituals, defined as Life-Cycle Rituals or Rites of Passages, are of tremendous importance for carrying out cross-cultural communications. In 1909 the Belgian anthropologist Arnold van Gennep suggested that these rituals should be identified by these terms, conceiving them as a symbolic sign of a person's transition from one social status to a qualitatively different according to the age periods. The Rites of passage ceremonies occur when people reach a new stage in life and take a new position in community with a broader set of mutual social relations.

Life-Cycle Rituals are meaningful both for an individual and for a social, ethnic group, stemming from it. Every young person of a cultural community shall endure it, obtain their new status, and recognize the new social bonds in this community. Simultaneously the society recognizes their new position with full rights and responsibilities. Thus, the rites of passage are the rituals for identifying a human's new age and social position.

Indeed, it is logical that Rites of Passage rituals are determined by scholars, mostly in social terms. American academics write: "Rites of passage are ceremonies that mark a change in a person's social position. These ritualistic ceremonies <...> help individuals and society deal with important life changes, such as birth, puberty, marriage, and death. Rites of passage are more than ways of recognizing certain transitions in a person's life, however. When a person marries, for example, he or she not only takes on a new status but also creates an entire complex of new relationships. Then, these rites of passage are important public rituals that recognize a wider set of altered social relationships" [4]. The rites of passage have an extremely positive meaning for every culture due to their manifestation of the radical changes in a human being's socialization as in acceptance by society. In this context, these ceremonies show the cultural, ethnic, and religious diversity of the world while stressing their unity through people's specific activities.

There are coming-of-age ceremonies, existing as the specific kind of the rite of passages. These rituals provide the transition from youth to adulthood and define the boundaries of a definite age. Margaret Mead, the famous American anthropologist, contends that the "coming-of-age" phase refers us to the "set of ceremonies that marks the boundaries of adolescence" [5]. For the most part, such rituals in different ethnic

cultures refer to teenagers' initiation into adult life and have three typical stages: separation, transition, and reintegration.

These phases can be considered a symbolic interpretation of passing the previous age and transferring to the new life phase. Barbara D. Miller, the American researcher in the sphere of cultural anthropology, covers these stages as follows: "In the first phase, the initiate (the person undergoing the ritual) is separated physically, socially, or symbolically from normal life. <...> In many cultures of the Amazon, East, and West Africa, adolescents are secluded for several years in separate huts or areas away from the village. The transition phase, or the "liminal phase," is when the person is no longer in the previous status but is not yet a member of the next stage. Liminality often involves the learning of specialized skills that will equip the person for the new status. Reintegration, the last stage, occurs when the initiate emerges and is welcomed by the community in the new status" [6]. The final stage serves for person's initiation into a new life, immersing into additional obligations and relationships. The cultural, anthropological, and ethnographical data has approved the three shared initiation phases. Thus, coming-of-age ceremonies can be realized as one of the most powerful means of contemporary communications.

Nevertheless, nowadays, puberty rituals show more economic character than merely a social one, being caused by establishing gender status in a community. Reflection of diverse modern cultures demonstrates that the differences in the ritual's implementations depend on the mode of production and labor division, dominating in a specific society. If women's work is valuable and essential in a society, then the puberty ceremonies are annually held there, despite possibly being painful. Young women pass the different kinds of age initiations, and often at the first and second stages (separation and transition), they master those activities that will suit the best

their new social role in the economy. "For example, among the Bemba of southern Africa, during initiation, a girl learns to distinguish thirty or forty different kinds of mushrooms and to know which ones are edible and which are poisonous" [7]. These ceremonies assign the specific types of work for women supporting their ascension to a new socialization stage.

One of the most spectacular and striking examples of the Life-Cycle Rituals, or rites of passage, is the Apache Puberty Sunrise Ceremony, which refers to girls' initiation into woman and motherhood. This ceremony was incorporated into a deep-rooted tradition of the Native American tribe. The history of this tradition began before the Victorian period in the 18th century. During the Victorian epoch in the 19th century, the English conservative and religious missionaries tried to baptize the Indian tribes in America. The

celebration of Sunrise ceremony, or becoming-woman ritual, was announced illegal and prohibited. In the 1978th, the Indian female rite of passage was openly re-established at most Native American reservations, still existing in the USA.

The Apache sunrise ceremony, or Na'ii'ees, today is "an arduous communal four-day ceremony that the Apache girls of the past and present experience <...>. Through numerous sacred ceremonies, dances, songs, and enactments, the girls become imbued with the physical and spiritual power of White Painted Woman and embrace their role as women of the Apache nation" [8].

The ritual serves at least three reasons: spiritual, personal, and communal. Every girl in Apache reservations retains a tight relation with the Indian historical legacy. The spiritual purpose of the rite of passage is to show how a girl keeps the commands of her people due to the internal and robust connection with the White Painted Woman, or Changing Woman, i.e., according to the Apache Creation myth, the tribe's "first woman". Personal goal contains the manifestation of a girl's new physical position as a woman and learning what it means to become a woman and mother. This purpose relates to the Indian's idea that a woman is a symbol of Nature because just a woman can create a new generation. The personal point is highly important. "Most Apache women who have experienced the Sunrise Ceremony say afterwards that it significantly increased their self-esteem and confidence. When it ended, they no longer felt themselves to be a child; they truly experienced themselves as "becoming woman" [9]. The communal reason refers to the social and cultural background of the Indian tribe, with having a substantial impact on every Apache person. Through immersion into the new stage of her life, an Apache young girl symbolizes the individual and social phenomena of the tribe's life, such as hard work, desire to understand the needs of other community members, and take care of them, etc. Thus, she presents herself to the world of Apache people, and, simultaneously, the tribe expects her to unite all the community members even for a short time of the celebration. She also waits for the tribe's members to receive their blessing, support, acceptance, good wishes, and love.

The Sunrise ceremony includes all three stages mentioned earlier of initiation to the new status and period of life (separation, transition, and reintegration). The days before the ceremony are the separation period. A girl is prepared by a Medicine Woman for the ritual in a different place, being located separately from the community and family. The rite of passage Na'ii'ees embraces eight phases that have the primary purpose of integrating both an initiated person and community. A young girl makes a transition to the adult life with the specific help and encouragement of the society, being

an integral part of it. The tribe is being driven into the initiation, recognizing her new social position and bonds and assisting her in self-identification of the new cultural and communal status. It brings the Apache members together (they live all over the world but come specially to their reservations in the USA for participation at the ceremony), cooperates and reconciles them, allows all the families to strengthen their duties, and deeply keep the native Indian cultural heritage.

The main advantage of the Apache Puberty Sunrise Ceremony consists of its cross-cultural functionality. The ritual allows preserving the long-centuries traditions of North America aborigines, with broadcasting their culture worldwide. It might be possible to participate in the initiation for all persons interested in the culture of native Americans and who are eager to know their historical touches and contemporary feelings and behavior. These sorts of ceremonies are being conducted for decades, not only in the Apache community's reservations but also in the Navajo, Wintu, Papago, and others. The American Indian tribes' members keep the open hearts for the manifestation of their initial culture and its implementations even, especially, in globalization conditions. Sometimes they successfully "steal the show" for many contemporary spectators.

IV. RELIGIOUS RITUALS AS BROADCAST OF NATIVE PEOPLES' CULTURE (ON THE EXAMPLE OF THE CASPIAN REGION OF RUSSIA)

Rituals are being conducted worldwide, including some regions of Russia, and this fact positively contributes to the development of ethnic tourism and indigenous tourism as an alternative kind of the first. The cultural and cognitive components prevail over the commercial one in the indigenous tourism, and, for instance, in Russia, this type of tourism "embraces not all the ethnic groups but only those who have obtained the official status of indigenous small-numbered peoples" [10]. Thus, ceremonies performing within any ethnic culture may often serve as indigenous and religious tourism destinations.

Speaking of the places where ethnic, cultural, and religious peculiarities of multinational Russia have been nurtured for centuries, we should mention the Caspian region. The Caspian territory is known to relate to the active revival of the ritualized transmission of culture. This part of Russia relates to the specific cultural diversity of many ethnic communities – Azerbaijanian, Kazakh, Kalmyk, Persian, Russian, Turkmen, etc. – and the relationship of their cultures and religions. Ethnical identification of the Caspian region people is essentially and deeply related to their religious entities and faith.

Veneration of sacred religious places has gained a particular meaning for knowing of the Caspian region culture. The cult is referring to the peoples' ethnic self-consciousness originating from the long history. Deep respect for sacred religious sites in the Russian Caspian Sea region is inherent to Islamic culture. In the Caspian region, religious worship of sacred places, expressed in special rituals, is manifested among the peoples living in the Volga villages of Astrakhan region, the North Caucasus, and in Kalmykia [11].

The defining traits of these rituals and ceremonies are mostly shared by people living in different Caspian territories. The rituals encourage the integration of ethnic communities belonging to the different cultures but, as a rule, embracing by one single religion. Over the terrains with the Islamic prevalence, the rituals and rites' content are deep-rooted with the sacral places and is being featured by the rest of worships of the pre-Islamic period. For instance, the cult rite in Yango-Asker village of the Astrakhan region mainly resembles the ritual ruzi-tef, which has its roots in the pre-Islamic practice of the fire worshipping. Also, in the cult rites of veneration of holy places are traced Sufism features with territorial specificity.

However, depending on the region, the rituals, perpetuating the sacral places, may be performed in a specific way basing on some religious and ethnic peculiarities. The Caspian region boasts uniqueness and distinctiveness, determined by the very history of culture and religions in this part of Russia. The cross-cultural relations between numerous ethnic groups also made an outstanding contribution to the region's cultural diversity and originality. Thus, a wide spreading of Islam in the Russian Caspian region was reasoned by the influence of the Islamic trends coming from Middle Asia, the Volga region, the North Caucasus. There were extended Sufism, the preaching of dervishes, with no excepting of traditional Islam growth. Caused by the religious tolerance over the Caspian region, all the creeds and doctrines have found a shared base for cross-cultural dialogue, and the administrative territories have been developing within ethnical and cultural uniqueness. Therefore, the Caspian region is the significant ethnocultural and religious cluster merging many people living there.

V. CONCLUSION

The global world witnesses the interrelations among peoples being implemented by the varieties of means and ways. Ethnic culture is being transmitted via the developed system of informational technologies and digital media by the demonstrations of arts and science achievements at exhibitions and the exchange programs in the academic sphere. Moreover, ethnic and religious types of tourism have obtained a significant number of advantages. People can learn about new cultures, touch

the sacral grounds of different religions, and even experience the initiate forms of ceremonies or participate in some cultural events of a host country. In this context, the ritual in plenty of its forms takes pride of place in the cross-cultural communications and knowing another state and nation. We have considered some of the up-to-date rituals – by the North America and Russian Caspian region, emphasizing their intercultural significance that characterizes all secular and religious rites. The authors conclude that ritual per se is an essential means establishing the peaceful interrelation between people.

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