

THE CONSTRUCTION OF A POSITIVE ETHNIC IDENTITY  
IN THE CURRENT ARTISTIC PRACTICES

by

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A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements  
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy  
Department of Cultural Studies, Institute of Humanities  
Siberian Federal University  
Krasnoyarsk, Russia

2016

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## ABSTRACT

Current processes caused by globalization and multiculturalism result in opposing cultural forms of a positive ethnic identity, related either to hyperidentity or hypoidentity, that depend on the emotional and evaluative attitude of the individual towards his/her ethnic group. This or that cultural form of a positive ethnic identity leads to disharmony of the individual, both with oneself and society in general. The achievement of harmony is possible only if a positive ethnic identity is a norm of inter-ethnic interaction, when members of ethnocultural groups have a positive image of not only their community, but also take into account the value systems of other groups. This dissertation investigates how it is possible to restore a positive ethnic identity by means of artistic practices, which mechanisms help to construct a positive ethnic identity in the status of a norm in the mind of the individual and society in general. The dissertation has two chapters. Chapter I examines the basic theoretical and methodological principles of the construction of an ethnic identity, the conceptual approaches to reveal the nature of ethnicity, explains which of them has a priority and why, describes the main content of a positive ethnic identity, and how the

principles of the cultural-semiotic approach are applied to study the constructivist possibilities of artistic practices. Chapter II demonstrates the cultural-semiotic mechanisms of the construction of a positive ethnic identity in art. Using the concepts of worldview, ethnic worldview, artistic worldview and ethnocultural values, the work describes how these mental structures take part in the construction of a positive image of an ethnic community, and how they are related to artistic practices. To reveal cultural-semiotic mechanisms of artistic practices in the process of constructing a positive ethnic identity, it is necessary to address to the Khakass culture. The dissertation highlights not only the certain historic and cultural events that are important for the ethno-cultural group, but also carries out a philosophical and art analysis of fine art paintings and graphic works of the Khakass art as a representative artistic practice of the indigenous peoples of Siberia.

The results of Chapter I indicate that according to constructivism and the cultural-semiotic approach, the artistic practices offer a way to construct a positive ethnic identity as a mental structure through such symbolic forms as the worldview, ethnic worldview, and artistic worldview. They reflect the consciousness of the individual and society in general, and that what is important for the ethnic group and have the greatest potential for the construction of a positive image of an ethnic community. Chapter II reveals the mechanisms of the construction of a positive ethnic identity by example of the Khakass fine art. The dissertation argues that the issue of constructing a positive ethnic identity by means of artistic practices is dialectic in its nature. On the one hand, ethno-cultural values, created in historical development of the ethnic group, have primordial nature, i.e. they are initially a certain construct, regulating the life of the ethnic group. On the other hand, ethno-cultural values, embodied in the works of art, acquire a second life as mental constructs, deliberately created by a person (artist, viewer) and secured by means of artistic practices. It is a certain secondary construct. Therefore, works of art perform a secondary socio-cultural construction of a positive ethnic identity, using primary constructs of ethnic values as their signs.

This dissertation addresses the deconstruction of visual images, an area of increasing a research focus. Within the context of ethnic and cultural studies, it provides the serious ideological content with respect to the mechanisms of the construction of a positive ethnic identity by the members of ethnocultural groups living in a pluralistic society.

## PREFACE

The work presented in this thesis has been carried out at the Department of Cultural Studies, Institute of Humanities, Siberian Federal University, Krasnoyarsk, Russia.

### List of papers included in the thesis

Paper I. **Nevolko, N.N.** (2011). The historiographical review of the scientific literature of the late XIX to the first decade of the XXI century concerning the problem of ethnic identification of the Khakass ethnos. *Journal of Siberian Federal University. Social Science*, 4 (6), 823-836.

Paper II. **Nevolko, N.N.** (2011). The visualization of ethnic theme in the Khakass artists paintings and graphic works of art. *Journal of Siberian Federal University. Social Science*, 4(8), 1109-1126.

Paper III. Koptseva, N.P., **Nevolko, N.N.** (2012). The national visual art in the process of formation and preservation of the ethnic identity of indigenous peoples (by the example of Khakass visual art). *Journal of Siberian Federal University. Social Science*, 5(8), 1179-1198.

Paper IV. **Seredkina, N.N.** (2014). Revisiting methodological principles of cultural-semiotic approach in studying art of indigenous peoples of the North, Siberia and the Far East. *Journal of Siberian Federal University. Social Science*, 7(8), 1342-1357.

Paper V. **Seredkina, N.N.** (2015). Cultural-semiotic strategies of constructing indigenous northern ethnicity in art (based on the Yakut art school). Journal of Siberian Federal University. *Social Science*, 8(4), 769-792.

Paper VI. Zamarayeva, Y.S., Kistova, A.V., Pimenova, N.N., Reznikova, K.V., **Seredkina, N.N.** (2015). Taymyr reindeer herding as a branch of the economy and a fundamental social identification practice for indigenous peoples of the Siberian Arctic. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, 6(3), 225-232.

### **Comments on the author's contribution to the papers**

The author wrote the first draft and edited the manuscript of the Paper III, and was responsible for the part devoted to the analysis of the reindeer visual image in Nenets and Dolgan arts in Paper V.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my deepest and sincere gratitude to my advisor and committee members. First and foremost, I owe Prof. Dr. Natalia P. Koptzeva a great deal of appreciation for her faith in me, encouragement, patience, editing, and numerous discussions during my Ph.D. Thank you for mentoring, and the support you provided me in this study.

I am grateful to Prof. Veronica A. Razumovskaya and Anastasiya S. Dubovik for English language corrections.

Sincere thanks also go to the Siberian Federal University, and especially its rector Prof. Dr. Eugene A. Vaganov and director of the Institute of Humanities Cand. Denis N. Gergilev for the possibility to study, advance and become the best.

I sincerely thank my friends and colleagues of department of culture for their kindness and friendship.

Finally, my family is the reason for where I am today. Thank you, my mother, Tatyana V. Nevolko, my father Nicolay I. Nevolko, and my sister, Valentina Nevolko, for always believing in me and celebrating even my smallest success. I lovingly dedicate this dissertation to you. Thank you, my loving husband and best friend, Aleksandr, and our miraculous daughter, Maria, for your love and support. This journey is not complete without you.

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## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

This dissertation explores the possibilities of the construction of a positive ethnic identity in the current artistic practices, one of which is the national art of the Khakass ethnocultural group. In the last years (1990-2010s) the smaller and indigenous peoples of Russia (Dolgans, Nenets, Selkups, Khakasses, Chulym, Enets, Evenks, Yakuts and others) experience powerful assimilation. In most cases they are forced to accept and assimilate with the dominant culture of the population resident in the area where they live. As a result, the significance of their national ideals is levelled within the ethnic group though they still exist in-crowd. In the worst case some forms of the traditional culture of the ethnic group are lost as unclaimed by representatives of the nation in the modern life conditions. That happened with the national religion of the Khakass, shamanism, which had lost its original meaning and is not perceived as religion by the representatives of the nation. Assimilation which has become a natural process for the multi-ethnic regions of Russia, as a result, redirects consciousness of the ethnos representatives to other cultural ideals that are, though not their “native”, still valuable in the environment of a different ethnic group. The awareness of the processes occurring within the ethnic group generates anxiety among the representatives of minor peoples. In its turn, the anxiety boosts the need to search the traditions that would revive the ethnic self-identification of the people and the ethnic culture in general. Therefore, the research of the artistic practices of an ethnic group enables us to reveal the values that are relevant for the given ethnos and that serve as a specific factor in the identification of ethnic group members, as long as the artistic culture is the unique sphere of human life where the original and native ideals of the people are preserved. The work of art is the one of the main expression forms of the national culture which is understood in this study as a means of fixing the archaic-material and spiritual traditions of the people.

Based on the existing literature and the visual materials of indigenous peoples of Siberia, the present study focuses on the mechanisms of the construction of a positive ethnic identity by means of artistic practices.

## **Background of the Research problem**

As we can read above, the modern picture of ethnic processes is quite complex and contradictory. This is proved by the trends generated by globalization and multiculturalism. On the one hand, in the course of inter-ethnic cooperation the process of unification, manifested in erasing ethnic differences and ethnic uniqueness of separate ethnocultural groups in favor of the dominant culture, is updated. On the other hand, along with the trend in the development of the processes of unification we can observe the growth of national consciousness, which is manifested in appealing to one's past, history and an absolute desire to save that what connects members of ethnic groups with their native national culture. These trends lead to the formation of opposing cultural forms of a positive ethnic identity (Aklaev, Drobizheva, Andrushchak, Soldatova, 1996, et al.), related to either hyperidentity (Zdravomyslov, 1999, Soldatova, 1998, Tavadov, 2002, et al.), or to hypoidentity (Arutiunian, 1999, Khotinets, 2000), which depends on the emotional and evaluative attitude of the individual to their ethnic group. This or that cultural form of a positive ethnic identity leads to disharmony of the individual, both with oneself and society in general. The achievement of harmony is possible only if a positive ethnic identity is a norm of inter-ethnic interaction (Soldatova, 1998), when members of ethnocultural groups have a positive image of not only their community, but also take into account the value systems of other groups.

## **Statement of the Problem and Need for the Study**

Today the practices of the construction of an ethnic identity are widely used at all levels of the social life of the individual and society in general (Beliakova, 2007, Madiukova, 2008, et al.). Mainly, these are public fields (organization of national celebrations, special issues in the media), which create a symbolic space of the representation of a positive image of an ethnocultural group, by means of which ethnicity is not only socially reproduced, but reappears, being created in each

individual human existence. Along with these "fields" of the representation of an ethnic identity, extensive interpretive and predictive perspectives are opened by the deconstruction of visual images. Artistic practices of indigenous and low-numbered peoples of Siberia as a whole, and the Khakass fine art in particular, are a special symbolic "field" (P. Bourdieu) of the representation in the iconic constructions of the spiritual experience of the people (Iusupov, 2007), and that what can act as the strategy of the construction of a positive ethnic identity. In this interdisciplinary approach artistic practices are still understudied, while the deconstruction of visual images, in particular, the national fine art as a special image-symbolic artistic practice, opens not only interpretive, but also extensive prognostic perspectives with respect to the mechanisms of the construction of a positive ethnic identity by the members of ethnocultural groups living in a pluralistic society.

For this thesis research it is important to find out the specificity of the cultural-semiotic construction of a positive ethnic identity, so a special attention is paid to social and anthropological, ethnopsychological, artistic and culturological studies, where the nature and dynamics of an ethnic identity, the foundations of a cultural-semiotic approach, the trends in the development of artistic practices of indigenous and low-numbered peoples of Siberia, are considered. In this regard, an interdisciplinary approach to the study of ethnicity, involving synthesis and comparison of data obtained in the various fields of knowledge, seems to be relevant (Schwartz, Syed, Yip, Knight, Umaña-Taylor, Rivas-Drake, Lee, 2014).

To sum up, this study will help to develop a social and cultural analysis of the construction of a positive ethnic identity of indigenous peoples of Siberia involving visual images of artistic practices. Thus, this research contributes to the study of the relationships between artistic practices and an ethnic identity that will provide an important theoretical framework for analyzing ethnic experiences of other ethnocultural groups.

## **Research Questions**

The marked above trends determine the necessity of studying of the following research questions.

- (1) What is the nature of ethnicity? What are the conceptual approaches to reveal it? Which of them has a priority and why?
- (2) What is a positive ethnic identity?
- (3) How are the principles of the cultural-semiotic approach applied to study the constructivist possibilities of artistic practices?

More precisely, this study addresses the following questions:

- (4) What are the mechanisms of the construction of a positive ethnic identity in art?
- (5) Which role do artistic practices play in constructing the positive ethnic identity of indigenous peoples of Siberia?

To address these questions, the thesis explores the national art of indigenous peoples of Siberia, in particular, the fine art by Khakasses, residing in the Eastern Siberia of the Russian Federation, and characterized by the well-developed artistic culture.

## **Method**

The purpose of the study is to reveal the mechanisms of a cultural-semiotic construction of a positive ethnic identity by analyzing constructivist capacities of works of national fine art. To achieve the goal, the author determined the following research objectives:

1. To analyze the existing foreign and domestic scientific approaches to the study of the phenomenon of “ethnicity” and to identify the underlying conceptual and methodological foundations for the cultural-semiotic construction of a positive ethnic identity.
2. To analyze the basic principles of a cultural-semiotic approach.

3. To reveal cultural-semiotic mechanisms of artistic practices in the process of constructing a positive ethnic identity.

4. To explore the constructivist capacities of national art on the basis of the analysis of paintings and graphic works of the Khakass art school.

The most important thing is that the author uses the concept of the symbolic production of ethnicity proposed by the theorists of constructivism (F. Barth, E. Gellner, V.S. Malakhov, V.A. Tishkov, E. Hobsbawm and others); the theory of ethnopsychology, whose main provisions are defined by such scholars as L.M. Drobizheva, V.P. Levkovich, G.U. Soldatova, T.G. Stefanenko, V.Ju. Hotinec; the methodological principles of the cultural-semiotic approach (J. Alexander, F.K. Smith, C. Geertz, Ju.M. Lotman, G.N. Lola, E.A. Orlova, Ch.S. Peirce), and the strategies of the philosophical and art analysis by V.I. Zhukovskii, N.P. Koptseva, D.V. Pivovarov.

Among the logical procedures involved in this thesis research, the author addresses to the theoretical methods (the analysis of the socio-anthropological, culturological, ethnological, ethnopsychological, art scientific literature on the subject of the research, the conceptual and categorical-notional analysis of the basic concepts, testing a working hypothesis), the empirical methods (observation, analysis and interpretation of the works of the Khakass fine art) and the method of introspection (reflection).

### **The Khakass people: historical discourse**

Khakassia (Khakastar, Tadar, Khoodai) is an indigenous people of Eastern Siberia of the Russian Federation. In the 1920s the Khakass ethnonym was stated in official documents. According to the census in 2010 the total number of Khakasses was 72 959 people in Russia. The largest percentage of the Khakass people lives in the Republic of Khakassia. Prior to 1917, Khakassia had been a part of Minusinsk and Achinsk districts of the Yenisei province and Kuznetsk district of the Tomsk region. In 1923, Khakassia County was formed. In 1930 it was transformed into

Khakass Autonomous Oblast merging into West Siberian region, and in 1934 the Oblast became part of Krasnoyarsk Krai. In 1991, Khakassia acquired the status of an independent republic.

The Khakass also live in Krasnoyarsk Krai (4102 Khakass people) and the Republic of Tyva, neighboring Khakassia. In Krasnoyarsk Krai the center of migration flows is Krasnoyarsk, the capital of the region. By September 1, 2015 the number of Krasnoyarsk inhabitants had amounted to 1056.3 people. Modern Krasnoyarsk is the largest business, industrial and cultural center of Eastern Siberia, the future capital of the World Universiade 2019.

The national language is Khakass of the Turkic group of the Altai language family. The Khakass language has four dialects, which are the Kacha dialect, the Sagai dialect, the Kyzyl dialect and the Shor dialect. The writing system was established in the 20th century on the basis of the Russian drawing. Since then the Khakass language has been implemented in schools. Currently, the Khakass language is used for television and radio broadcasting; newspapers, the literary miscellany Akh Taskhyl, fiction and course books are also published in Khakass. However, for the most part in modern life the representatives of the Khakass ethnocultural group are forced to communicate in Russian. The national language is the prerogative of interpersonal and family communication.

Traditional occupations of Khakasses are seminomadic cattle-breeding (horses, cattle, sheep), hunting in the forest, in the Sayan mountains, agriculture (barley, millet, corn). In the 20th century the development of industry forced Khakasses to explore nontraditional occupations; that is how the working class and the intelligentsia appeared.

The artistic culture of Khakasses is rather well-developed and has its own history. It is represented by a variety of artistic practices: folklore, arts and crafts (wood carving, embroidery with coloured threads, making jewelry of coral, silver), and the national fine arts.

Currently the Khakass youth migrates to large Russian cities, especially to Krasnoyarsk, in order to get higher education and a job. This certainly makes them

accept a series of norms of the Russian culture, namely learning the Russian language as the language of education and the factor providing an opportunity to get a job, the abandonment of traditional costumes with ornamental embroidery in everyday life, along with the participation in traditional festivities (Uren Khurty that is a holiday of the end of the sowing season, Tum Pairam, Ada Khorai that are aimed at the reproduction of ancient rituals of Turkic ancestors), while Orthodox holiday dates are celebrated. The dissertation focuses on the cultural experiences of this indigenous people and how they have met the modern challenges.

## CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

The substantive literature in this chapter is used to examine the relevant research on varied perspectives on ethnicity. This aim identified the need to refer to the analysis of scientific approaches to the nature of ethnicity. In an effort to provide a context for the discussion of the construction of a positive ethnic identity in the current artistic practices, this section offers the main meaning of such concepts as a positive ethnic identity, the worldview, the ethnic worldview and the artistic worldview.

### **Scientific Approaches to Ethnic Issues**

Since the late 60s - early 70s of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the ethnic issues have become the object of the research of scientists. Today, the problem is still at the heart of the scientific discussions of both Western and Russian social anthropologists, cultural specialists, political scientists, psychologists, sociologists, philosophers and ethnologists. The interest in ethnicity is caused by a number of sociocultural events that took place both in foreign countries and in the Russian state. Among them are the collapse of the colonial system in African countries, the increased activity of ethnic minorities, a surge of an ethnic identity (Aleksandrenko, 1996; Sadokhin, 2000; Stefanenko, 2009), and as a result, the aggravation of ethnic and racial relations (Arutjunjan et al., 1999), the formation of the new states in the territory of the former Soviet Union, raising the status of the national republics in the Russian Federation. These events intensified the processes that characterize the modern pluralistic society. On the one hand, this is a trend toward ever greater unification, erasing ethnic differences, ethnic uniqueness of individual nations, on the other hand, it is an active interest in their past, the desire to create or restore the national statehood (Stefanenko, 2009). This led to a wide practice of the construction of an ethnic identity at all levels of the social life of the individual and society in general.

The emergence of the concept of ethnicity<sup>1</sup> in the framework of the categories of ethnological science is associated with the need to emphasize the individual's belonging to an ethnic group (Shadt, 2005). Ethnicity in the most general sense is understood as a process of self-identification of an individual as a carrier of cultural features, ideas of the common ancestry, history, culture, language, life values learned in the process of socialization, with a certain ethnic group (Brown, Langer, 2010). The ethnos can not exist by itself, beyond the consciousness of specific individuals, and therefore there is the term of ethnicity, which reflects the social nature of the ethnos.

In the scientific discourse, ethnicity is considered primarily from the perspective of the two approaches, whose conceptual positions are radically different from each other. They are ethnicity as an objectively existing, "original" reality inherent in a person from the moment of his birth (primordialism (sociobiological direction), instrumentalists also accept this point view, reinterpreting it in accordance with their theory); and ethnicity as a phenomenon that is socially constructed on the basis of cultural differences, senses of a national identity (constructivism and its subapproach that is instrumentalism).

## **Primordialism**

The occurrence of primordialism (from the English *primordial* that means original, initial), or essentialism (Tishkov, 2001), in the 1950s-1960s is associated with the names of American sociologists E. Shils<sup>2</sup> (1911-1995) and C. Geertz<sup>3</sup> (1926-2006). Subsequently this approach was developed by Western anthropologists (E. Wolf, R. Gambino, W. Connor, T. Parsons, P. Van den Berg, E. Stewart, R. Wallace), sociologists (J. Simpson, J. Yinger ), as well as domestic ethnographers and historians (Iu.V. Bromley, L.N. Gumilev, S.M. Shirokogorov).

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<sup>1</sup> The term of ethnicity appeared in 1941 as an alternative to the concept of race. In 1953, the term of ethnicity was included in the Oxford Dictionary, but it was not seen as a meaningful concept by scientists before 1960.

<sup>2</sup> E. Shils introduced the term of primordial ties to characterize family relations.

<sup>3</sup> C. Geertz first started to develop the primordial approach with regard to ethnic issues.

All the theories of the primordial approach come down to the two areas: socio-biological (or natural) and evolutionary-historical.

The supporters of the first direction (P. van den Berg, L.N. Gumilev, A.Iu. Korkmazov, M.O. Mnatsakanian) consider ethnicity as an objective reality, the original (primordial, i.e. ancestral) characteristic of humanity (Arutyunyan et al., 1999). This characteristic emerged simultaneously with the development of mankind as a natural need to recognize the members of their own group. According to scientists, the ability to recognize the members of one's own group is laid down in the human mind initially at the level of the genetic code (Tishkov, 1997). In this regard, the supporters of the natural direction logically interpret ethnicity as "an extended related group" or "an extended form of a kin selection and connection" (Orlova, 2004). These connections are fixed, immutable, and in this sense, acquire the status of sacredness. They lie at the heart of family, territory, language, tradition and religion (Duling, 2005). The same views are represented in the national science by the concept of passionarity by L.N. Gumilev (1912-1992), who considered an ethnos to be a biophysical reality (Gumilev, 2008). Continuing this line of thought, the modern ethnologist S.N. Pushkin puts forward the idea that in the early years of life the child acquires these patterns from their parents and peers, and then uses them in the future (Pushkin, 2005). V.T. Puliaev believes that this social background defines the tradition and creates the ethnic history (Puliaev, 2002).

The representatives of the second direction of the primordial approach (J. Isaacs, K. Blue, C. Geertz, E. Shils, Iu.V. Bromley, S.E. Rybakov, S.M. Shirokogorov, et al.) regard ethnicity as a social, but not biological community. According to the researchers, ethnicity depends on historical changes (Sadokhin, Grushevitskaia, 2000). Social communities are considered as groups, which have their own language, culture and identity, due to what they are different from other social communities. The similar idea of ethnicity in the Soviet science was developed in the works of Academician Iu.V. Bromley (1921-1990). He considered the ethnos in the narrow and broad sense of the word. In the narrow sense Iu.V. Bromley understands the ethnos as a nation, while in the broad sense he understands it as an

ethnic group (Bromley, 1972). According to F.I. Miniushev, being a primordial group, the ethnos is social in nature, and ethnical properties are formed only in territorial, natural, social-economic and state-legal conditions (i.e. depend on the historical changes) (Miniushev, 2009). The evolutionary-historical trend of primordialism prevailed in the world of science till the 60s-70s of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, in the domestic science – till the 90s of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Arutyunyan et al., 1999).

## **Instrumentalism**

In the early 1970s, instrumentalism (situationism, mobilizationism) emerged in the western ethnology as a reaction to the inability of primordialism to explain the growth of the national movements in the modern world (Wiener, 1998). Instrumentalists (foreign scientists such as J. de Vaux, A. Peterson Royce, N. Glazer, J. Moynihan, J. Nagel, D. Horowitz, Russian scientists such as M.N. Guboglo, L.M. Drobizheva, Z.V. Sikevich, V.A. Yadov) tend to highlight the functional features of ethnicity, allotting a leading role to the elite. Ethnicity is seen as a resource used by the elite in order to resolve the ethnic relations (Brown, Langer, 2010), contain political mobilization (Martinovic, Verkuyten, 2014), as a means to attract society to the struggle for power (hence *mobilizationism*) (Stefanenko, 2009). However, ethnicity as part of instrumentalism is not only seen as a means to meet the interests of the elite. According to S.V. Sokolovskii, the individual can cope with the information complexity of the modern life by means of ethnicity (Sokolovskii, 1994). The results of the long-term (over 15 years) research of the identity, in particular the study of the fate of Mexican immigrants' children in New York, allowed R.C. Smith (2014) to make the conclusion about an identity as a strategy to improve the social status of the migrant. This position is shared by C. Kulich, F. Lorenzi-Cioldi, V. Iacoviello (2015). The ethnic identity is also seen as a source of a psychological protection for adolescents from ethnic minorities in the face of discrimination coming from other ethnocultural groups (Romero, Edwards et al., 2014). Each time ethnicity

is determined situationally (hence *situationism*), no matter if it is used in the interests of the elite, or an individual.

The information concept by S.A. Arutyunov and N.N. Cheboksarov is usually attributed to the instrumentalist approach. The scientists study ethnicity as a product of the information flows which deliver the cultural traditions and artistic heritage of the people to the next generation (Arutyunov, Cheboksarov, 1972). Delivering values, norms and traditions leads to an orderly cooperation between individuals and a society.

A feature of instrumentalism is that it is aimed at identifying the functions realized by ethnicity. The main goals of the supporters of this approach are to find out the real assistance that ethnicity renders in the life of the individual and society in general. The authors of this approach come to the conclusion that ethnicity and an ethnos are designed to provide the individual with the most favorable conditions for a harmonious existence in a society (Sadokhin, Grushevitskaya, 2000).

A number of scientists identify instrumentalism as an independent approach. However, some analysts regard instrumentalism as a subapproach of constructivism, seeing it as a direction akin to constructivism.

## **Constructivism**

Since the beginning of the 80s of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the constructivist approach has become the most important approach to the study of ethnicity.

The representatives of the constructivist approach (F. Barth, E. Gellner, V.A. Tishkov, E. Hobsbawm and others) define ethnicity as an intellectual construct, deliberately created by the entities of the social organism (writers, scientists, politicians, artists, a separate individual, one or another social institution). Following F. Barth (born in 1928), the Norwegian anthropologist and the founder of constructivism, constructivists reject primordialists' idea of the objective reality of ethnicity. According to F. Barth, ethnicity is a situational phenomenon, permanently constructed by means of a symbolic distinction. F. Barth understands cultural

differences not as a number of "objective" differences, "but only as a set of the differences that people themselves consider important ..." (Barth, 2006, 15-17). It is the subjective nature, which Barth assigns to ethnicity, that becomes the hallmark of constructivism. In this respect, the presence of a symbolic boundary is important. Determined by means of ethnic markers, it is a base for the symbolic construction of an ethnic group. Thus, according to F. Barth, "it is the ethnic boundary that defines the group, but not the cultural content inside it" (ibid, 15).

The symbolism of the ethnic boundary, its conditional nature are emphasized by modern researchers as well. For example, according to the views of Western scholars, ethnic boundaries are mobile and are used to find out how to distinguish one group from the other in the *us - them* opposition (Duling, 2005). As O.A. Bogatova notes, ethnic boundaries exist, despite the absence of cultural differences (Bogatova, 2004). One of the most active Russian supporters of constructivism is V.A. Tishkov, according to whom, ethnicity as a sphere of beliefs about cultural differences is "an image that is extremely vague and difficult to perceive" (Tishkov, 1997: 8). Ethnicity in this representation is referred to the process of the social construction of imagined communities, whose cultural characteristics emphasize their uniqueness and difference from other communities. Thus, for constructivism ethnicity is:

- A special mental construct created by the individual for a definite purpose (creating a certain image of the group, self-determination as its member (Sadokhin, Grushevitskaya, 2000));

- A means of constructing and maintaining a "successful frame", which is closely linked with the choice of the most social-priority ethnic identity (Lee, Zhou, 2014).

In relation to the hybrid concept of the ethno-racial identity a number of foreign scientists introduced the concept of metaconstruct (Umaña-Taylor, Quintana, Lee et al., 2014), emphasizing the coexistence of the two constructs, which are ethnic and racial identities, and fixing the areas of common interest of personal-ethnic and racial experiences in the socio-historical context.

Constructivism and instrumentalism are both criticized. If instrumentalism is criticized for its narrow understanding of ethnic interests as economic and political, as well as for the actual identification of ethnic groups with interest groups and classes, constructivism is criticized for the overestimation of the importance of people's conscious activity in the process of ethnic communities' emergence. B.E. Wiener notes that constructivism mainly focuses on describing how people interpret reality and how they try to meet the challenges of life (Wiener, 1998).

Analysts have repeatedly spoken in favor of the synthesis of the above-described approaches in order to create a theory that could fully explain the phenomenon of ethnicity. In particular, a strong supporter of this idea is V.A. Tishkov. However, these models are also subject to criticism (Wiener, 1998). In general, most theorists agree with the idea of F. Barth of the subjective nature of ethnicity, so today constructivism still plays a leading role in the explanation of this phenomenon (Duling, 2005).

In this work I adhere to the basic ideas of the constructivist approach to the explanation of ethnicity, according to which ethnicity is constructed in the mind of the individual, society in general through a series of cultural-semiotic practices (art, cinema, media, political discourse, art critics), representing the number of social actions, in which the sign and symbolic forms of culture that carry certain social values and meanings are produced, stored and conveyed.

## **Definitions of Concepts**

### Positive ethnic identity

An ethnic identity, the concept of which roots back to the theory of a social identity, is a dynamic phenomenon. It is common practice to separate two main factors that determine the mobile character of an ethnic identity. On the one hand, this is the age factor, when as long as a person grows older, their degree of their commitment to an ethnic identity changes (Eriksen, Marcia, Phinney). On the other

hand, the emotional-evaluative component affects the individual acceptance of some form of an ethnic identity (Stefanenko, 2009). Human self-assessment in relation to their ethnicity may be underestimated (a hypoidentity), adequate (a positive ethnic identity) or inflated (a hyperidentity). A hyperidentity is manifested through a number of such types of an ethnic identity, that differ from one another in the degree of the individual's emotional evaluation of their ethnocultural group in relation to another one: from the trend of a high cultural distance of ethnocontact groups at the level of the emotional-conscious sphere (ethnocentrism) to the maximization of the interests of their group, often expressed by ethnic conflicts (nationalism). A hypoidentity also shows the dynamics of an emotional attitude of the individual to their and another ethnocultural group: from the trend of indifference to the problem of their own ethnicity, the values of their own and other peoples (ethnonegativism) to the actual identification of oneself with another ethnic group (ethnonihilism).

Among these opposing cultural forms of an ethnic identity, a positive ethnic identity is understood as a norm of inter-ethnic cooperation, the condition of a stable and independent existence of an ethnocultural group due to the fact that its members have a positive image of not only their community, but they also take into account the system of values of other groups. The forms of manifestation of a positive ethnic identity in the status of a norm are patriotism, pride in the achievements of one's own people, self-esteem (Umaña-Taylor, Quintana, Lee et al., 2014). The image of one's own people is seen as positive, the corresponding attitude to its history, culture and mentality is demonstrated (Tavadov, 2002). Man by nature seeks to maintain a positive ethnic identity in the status of a norm, since only a positive ethnic identity ensures its harmonious existence in a society. It contributes to the fact that the individual feels the psychological security and confidence (Stefanenko, 2009).

It should be noted that, on the one hand, the isolated cultural forms of an ethnic identity are considered as an abnormal ethnic interaction, on the other hand, each type of an ethnic identity can receive the status of a norm in any single case. If a person has taken some form of an ethnic identity, it means that it is comfortable and in a sense individually positive for this person. It is another matter that this "norm" is

rather temporary, additional in nature, depending on outside conditions of a human social life, while a positive ethnic identity as an initial norm of inter-ethnic interactions is based on ancestral, traditional values of an ethnocultural group. Therefore the fact that man by nature seeks to maintain exactly a primary positive ethnic identity as an opportunity to "touch" with their true ethnic culture is important. Today, scientists note the need to maintain a positive ethnic identity among representatives of ethnocultural groups in order to prevent the actualization of xenophobia. According to T.G. Stefanenko, there are a number of ways to maintain a positive ethnic identity. Among them are:

1. *The establishment of a psychological border between a group and oneself.*

The individual sees negative aspects in other members of their ethnocultural group, but not in oneself. The individual feels oneself above all that is a sign of a high self-esteem. This behavior allows maintaining a positive attitude towards one's own ethnic identity;

2. *The allocation of a subgroup within an ethnic group, to which positive characteristics are attributed;*

3. *The construction of an ambivalent identity, which allows maintaining a positive self-attitude partially, but contributes to the formation of a complex of split personality;*

4. The conscious change of a group and the formation of the *changed identity* (Stefanenko, 2009).

Thus, T.G. Stefanenko draws attention to the psychological criterion of a positive ethnic identity associated with the identity of the individual in the evaluation of their own and other ethnicity.

Based on the analysis of the sociocultural reality, it is possible to supplement the above list of strategies for forming and maintaining a positive ethnic identity.

1. The special state policy, fixing the priority directions in national policies, particularly those related to the problem of the preservation of the national language and culture. A major role in solving these problems is given to local governments that carry out regional programs to implement a number of measures aimed at the national

development and expansion of the international cooperation of the Russian Federation's peoples.

2. The conversion of cultural signs into intellectual property through legal mechanisms. The distribution of the rights for intellectual property is important to secure the uniqueness of the national culture, the construction of the country's overall sustainable national cultural system.

3. The symbolic reproduction of ethnicity by means of cultural practices. A major role in the symbolic reproduction of ethnicity is played by national-cultural associations (communities, associations, centers, autonomies, unions, etc.), whose primary purpose is the preservation and development of the national culture, acquaintance of the host country with the culture of another people. This practice is progressive. Thus, in Krasnoyarsk Krai national-cultural associations began to appear at the end of 1988. By 2006 there had been 69 of them, by 2014 - 81. The representatives of nearly 50 nations living in the region take part in the work of these associations<sup>4</sup>. The significance of this practice is that the national-cultural associations, or rather their activities, specific measures, model such "social fields", that are a symbolic space of the representation of an ethnocultural group's positive image. By means of sign and symbolic forms (fine art, literature, dance art, cinema, media) such values that form the basis of the national culture, and in this way are able to model a positive image of an ethnocultural group, are reproduced.

4. The tendency to integrate into the mainstream of cultural development. "Open areas" for inter-ethnic cooperation are established. One example is the interregional public organizations, in which a variety of events with the participation of representatives of different ethnocultural groups from different regions of the country are held. The trend towards openness is also manifested in the field of the artistic practice. The national art is integrated into the mainstream of the historical development of art, including contemporary art. The national artists follow the canons, which are accepted worldwide in the artistic community, thereby increasing not only the professional level of the individual artist, but the level of the national art

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<sup>4</sup> <http://my.krskstate.ru>

school in general as well. In addition, the artists not only organize exhibitions of their works within their region, but also actively participate in the exhibitions organized at the interregional and international levels.

5. Endowing the things that are typical of the daily life of ethnocultural groups with the status of a work of art. The most striking example is decorative and applied arts. What becomes a work of art in this case? The national costume, beaded ornament, applications of reindeer fur pieces, various products, inlaid with tin, silver or copper, wooden figurines, utensils, etc. These objects of value often become the characters of the works of the national fine art, especially in the genre of still life. According to the specificity of the genre, still life paintings offer a person to see the things that are close to him, that reflect his culture, using the simplest "language" accessible to the viewer. Thus, the value of the usual things, which surround a person and may be one of the factors of an ethnic identification, is affirmed.

Thus, in the context of social constructivism a positive ethnic identity gets a characteristic of the mental construct, generated by targeted actions of individual subjects of the social organism (social institutions, individual members of the artistic community, representatives of ethnocultural groups). This is a series of legal and cultural practices, modeling a special symbolic space in which ethnicity is not only presented to the public as something positive, but also reconstructed by the individual on the basis of the proposed sign and symbolic forms, embodying, as a rule, primary constructs of ethnocultural values.

## Worldview

The worldview is the core of self-organization, functioning, strength, which solidates ethnic groups (Archimacheva, 2010). There is a synonymic row of the concept of the worldview in science, namely "the image of the world", "the model of the world", "the world outlook", "the vision of the world", "the representation of the world". A number of scientists (S.D. Smirnov, S.V. Mazlumjan, A.A. Leont'ev et al.)

tend to allocate these categories as structural elements of the worldview, reflecting the individual ideas of individuals about the world around them.

In its semantic meaning the concept of the worldview is a complex multidimensional phenomenon. After analyzing different approaches (philosophical, sociological, culturological, psychological) to the content of this concept, we would like to draw attention to the most significant aspects of its content.

*1. The worldview appears to be the result of mental activity of the subject, so it is subjective.*

One of the first to introduce the concept of the worldview was the Austrian philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889-1951). He first turned to this term in his work "Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus", written in 1918 and published in 1921 in Germany. In 1922 the book was published in London with the parallel German-English texts and the preface by B. Russell. It is believed that L. Wittgenstein laid the basic classical ideas of the worldview as a kind of model of reality. According to the thinker, any view is the result of the subject's activity. It is logical and able to depict the world. In addition, the philosopher distinguishes the dual function of the view. On the one hand, it "informs others about something, as do the words," but for the one who informs it acts as "an image of another kind: for him it is his personal view, it can not be the same for anyone else" (Wittgenstein 1994: 179). At the same time L. Wittgenstein links the concept of the worldview with the concepts of man, which are not the same for the one who informs and the one who receives this message in their conveying function.

*2. The worldview is a structural phenomenon that reflects life and social reality through its image.*

The German philosopher, a representative of the philosophy of life, Oswald Spengler (1880-1936), speaking of reality, an individual's life, conventionally identifies two structural elements. It is "the soul" as something "possible", as that what is subject to "implementation", "formation", and "the world" as "the real", "the implemented", "the turned". O. Spengler regards "the implementation itself, the center and the meaning of life" as the present. According to the thinker,

understanding the reality is possible through "experiencing it in the form of a single, inspired, comfortable worldview ..." (Spengler, 1998: 203). In addition, he makes an emphasis on the existence of a variety of opportunities to acquire "the outside world" as a reflection and evidence of one's own existence. O. Spengler calls the language of culture a supreme means of realizing the world. Thus, O. Spengler talks about the worldview as a form of the experience of reality. Since reality has a certain structure, while the worldview is a form of the reflection of reality, there are reasons to believe that the worldview is interpreted by the philosopher as a structural phenomenon.

### *3. The worldview as a form of self-knowledge.*

In the process of constructing the worldview the subject identifies oneself with a constructed matter, by which the process of self-knowledge is implemented. This idea can be traced in the philosophy of the German thinker Martin Heidegger (1889-1976). The view is conceptualized by the thinker as a characteristic of the world, of all things in general. In the process of transformation of the world into the view (M. Heidegger), in the process of experiencing the life world (E. Husserl), man plays an important role, because "the matter becomes the matter only when it is delivered by a man who represents and establishes it" (M. Heidegger). M. Heidegger considers the concept of representation as "positioning towards oneself and with respect to oneself". In this sense, while positioning the present towards oneself as something opposed, relating oneself to the one who represents, man forms the view of all things, thereby bringing himself to "the stage", becoming a kind of representative of all things, in the sense of the objectified.

In the 1950s a new approach appeared within the framework of sociology. According to it, the worldview is understood as a vision of the universe inherent in various nations (Gavrov: 2002). This approach was proposed by the American ethnographer R. Redfield (1897-1958), who narrows the understanding of the worldview to the representations of peoples about themselves. In addition, he rejects the idea of the existence of a single national picture worldview. It is quite logical due to the fact that each nation develops its own worldview. The representations of the world, deflected in the consciousness of the individual or the representative of a

particular ethnic community, give an ethnic characteristic to the general worldview. Therefore, it is fair to note that R. Redfield understands the worldview as the worldview of a nation (or the ethnic worldview, although he does not introduce this term).

### Ethnic worldview

The ethnic worldview, which is a powerful marker of the identity of a people, takes a special place in the system of human representations of the social reality. The ethnic worldview is "one of the fundamental bases of any culture", "non-specific defense mechanism" (Lurie ). It includes holistic representations of the subject about the world, deflected through the prism of their own worldview. In other words, ethnic mentality is not only conditioned by the ethnic worldview, but also forms it.

According to the views of a number of scientists (E.S. Deriga, O.V. Zverev, L.G. Zolotikh, S. Lurie), the ethnic worldview is dynamic and mobile, it is not constant, it is subject to change over time. A variety of sociocultural changes taking place within the country (coups, migration, change of ideology, social explosions) may contribute to this. If the ethnic worldview is changeable over time, then the core of the ethnic group, constituting the specificity of culture and the worldview, does not change (Zolotikh, 2006). "The core of culture" (the term by K.B. Sokolov) or "the central area of culture" (Lurie), which consist of the fragments of the worldview, which are common for the majority of the members of an ethnic group and allow perceiving certain situations unequivocally, are the core of the ethnic group. S.V. Lurie defines "ethnic constants", understood as "the mechanisms that remove the psychological threat from the outside world and provide a member of the ethnos with an opportunity to act", as the "central area of culture". In other words, in the process of adaptation of the ethnic group to the surrounding natural and social environment, the formation of often unconscious constants that help the ethnos survive and grow occurs. These ethnic constants represent some fixed form of arranging experience, the content of which is the real experience of the cultural and historical life of the people.

It is ethnic constants that are the prism through which the ethnic group looks at the world. Value dominants and ethnic constants are added to the ethnic worldview, performing, as noted above, the function of a psychological defense. Thus, S.V. Lurie concludes that on the one hand, the ethnic worldview can be regarded as a derivative of the ethnic constants, and on the other hand, as a derivative of the value system. It is "immutable blocks ... which apparently can be expressed in a wide range of forms" (Lurie). Based on them, the ethnic group constructs more worldviews, namely those that have the greatest adaptive properties in the period of its existence. The forms of expression of the ethnic worldview are all the layers of the sociocultural life of the individual, particularly, myths and rituals, arts, folklore, ideology (Zverev, 2011), philosophy, literature, mythology, people's actions (Lurie).

In general, the analysis of approaches (sociolinguistic, psychological (ethnopsychological), culturological, socio-philosophical) to the ethnic worldview presented in the science leads to the conclusion that the idea of the ratio of the ethnic worldview and social reality is behind each of the approaches. The mental nature of this phenomenon is recognized. It is the mental structure associated with the social reality of a particular ethnocultural group. This structure is constructed by human consciousness in the process of interaction of the human subjective world with the reality (the objective world).

### Correlation of the Concepts of the Artistic Worldview and the Ethnic Worldview

Since we consider the construction of an ethnic identity by means of artistic practices, it is important to comprehend the concept of the artistic worldview and its relation to the ethnic worldview. An attempt to show how the artistic worldview is included in the ethnic worldview becomes significant. It should be noted that we understand both the artistic worldview and the ethnic worldview as mental forms of social consciousness, finding its expression in artistic practices.

A great interest in the concept of the artistic worldview appeared in the 80s of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In our work we adhere to the image-semantic approach in the

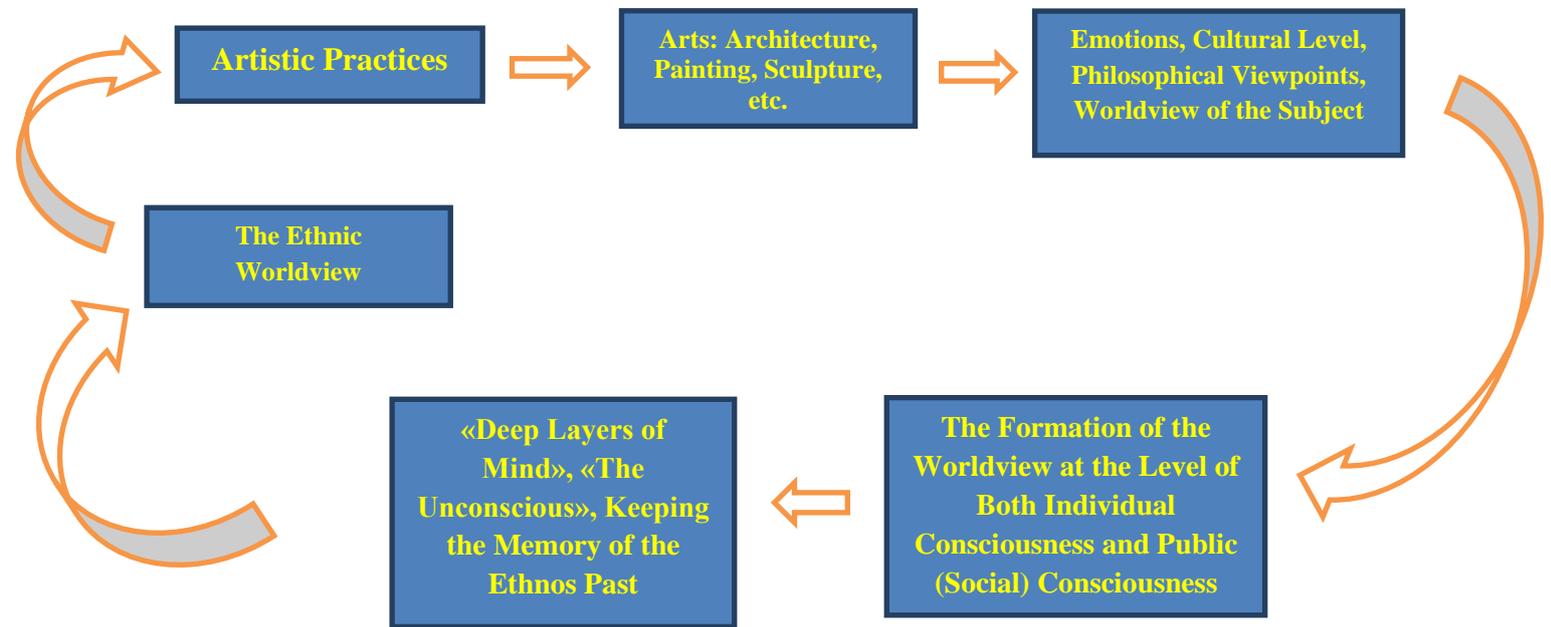
consideration of the concept. It is based on the specificity of the language of art and mentality of the cultures of different historical eras.

Image-symbolic forms, simulating the artistic space of a work of art, appeal to the emotional side of the individual's or viewer's life. Hegel also spoke about the emotional power of art. According to him, "the beauty of art provokes senses, feelings, intuition, imagination" (cit.ex. Zhuravlev, 1983: 126). Comprehending the phenomenon of ethnicity, scientists also note the importance of the emotional component, including the representative of the instrumentalist approach J. De Vaux and the domestic researcher of ethnopsychology T.G. Stefanenko. "By sympathy or empathy" (Volkova, 2009), "immersion", i.e. experiencing image-symbolic forms presented in the artistic space of the painting, as well as based on the cultural level, system of values, philosophical viewpoints and worldviews, the viewer constructs the artistic worldview at the level of consciousness. Consciousness as a form of leaning the outside world gives a cognitive function to the artistic worldview as well. According to B.S. Meilakh, "there is no other way to study the reality that could allow reproducing the past and the present of man, his memory of himself, and understanding people and events so vividly" (Meilakh, 1983: 120). In general, the artistic worldview can be defined as a symbolic reproduction of the reality on the basis of the artistic image of a work of art.

Based on the generally accepted idea that the formation of the artistic worldview occurs through the prism of the author's world view and world outlook, we come to the conclusion that at the level of the individual and public (social) consciousness the artistic worldview tends to metamorphose into the ethnic worldview that is a symbolic marker of the *us - them* distinction. The individual constructs the ethnic worldview, relying on the perception of the artistic images of art works, thanks to what "the unconscious" of a person and that what contains a memory of the past of their people are activated.

The awareness of the symbolic nature of artistic practices, features of the perception of works of art by the recipient, as well as understanding the dependence of the construction of the artistic worldview on historical, social and, mainly, ethnic

factors, allowed us to develop a model that captures the relationship of artistic practices, artistic and ethnic worldviews.



**Figure. 1. The visual model of the correlation of the concepts of the artistic worldview and the ethnic worldview**

In the process of constructing the artistic and ethnic worldviews at the level of both individual and public (social) consciousness the emotional component in the structure of the personality, as well as the cultural level, philosophical viewpoints and worldviews of the subject and society in general play an important role. In addition, taking into account the subjective nature of constructing the artistic worldview, I can talk about its transformation into the ethnic worldview as a marker of *us-them* distinction.

### **Khakass National Art in the Light of Scientific Literature**

The researchers' interest in the study of artistic practices as a special symbolic space of the representation of ethnicity appeared not long ago. Modern scientists,

such as N.P. Koptseva (2015), A.V. Kistova (2015), N.N. Pimenova (2014), K.V. Reznikova, E.A. Sertakova, A.A. Sitnikova (2015), have contributed greatly to the understanding of the artistic representations of an ethnic identity.

One of the representative artistic practices of constructing an ethnic identity is the fine art of the Khakass ethnocultural group. The first studies of the Khakass artistic culture occurs at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It was the time when the first published works devoted to the consideration of various aspects of the earliest forms of the Khakass artistic culture, namely the applied art, appeared. Until the 1970s, the Khakass fine art had been considered by scientists along with the art of Siberia as a whole. The individual works devoted to the art of Khakassia had not been created until that time. Perhaps this is due to the fact that the Khakass art was still in its infancy, and the material for the study had not been accumulated yet. Therefore, the first works devoted to the study of the art of Khakassia were only a few articles within ethnographic or encyclopedic publications. In particular, these are the articles by such researchers as S.V. Ivanov (1961) and S.M. Chervonnaya (1969), where the authors discuss the work of the leading artists of the 1960s, namely A.F. Kalinin, M.A. Burnakov and V.A. Todykov. The first studies devoted exactly to the Khakass art appeared in the 70-ies of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The works of I.K. Kidieikova (2002), L.R. Kyzlasov, N.V. Leontyev (1988), M.P. Chebodaeva (2004) and others contributed greatly to the understanding of the fine art of Khakassia. E.P. Matochkin (2009) and E.Iu. Pavlova (2007, 2008) also studied ethnic issues in the contemporary art of Siberian artists.

The specificity of “archaeoart” as a special tendency in the visual arts in Siberia is considered in the article by E.P. Matochkin called “Archaeology, ancient heritage and archaeoart of Siberia” (Matochkin, 2009). The author makes an attempt to detect the prerequisites of the origin of one of the most modern trends in Siberian art and also marks out its distinctive features. The consideration of archaeoart in its development is based on review of the works by some individual Siberian artists (in particular, the works by V.I. Surikov as “the forerunner of the Siberian archaeoart”, the works by G.I. Gurkin, N.Y. Tretyakov, V.F. Kapelko, I.I. Ortonulova, M.P.

Chevalkova, S.P. Lazarev, V.N. Kyzlasov, et al). The review of the works by Siberian artists includes the descriptions of individual paintings, mainly the storyline, which the author relates to the legacy of the past as its direct reflection. According to the researcher, the appeal to archaeoart is “striving through the art of antiquity once again to contact with the maternal warmth of the Earth, with the myths that gave rise to the natural being” (Matochkin, 2009, p.10). In addition, the artists aspire to comprehend the cultural space of Siberia through the legacy of the past and archaeoart becomes one of the means of its attainment. In this case the task of the artist is to create a new spiritual space of modernity after having looked into the past.

In the article “Ethnic theme in the contemporary art and folk crafts” (Pavlova, 2007) E.Iu. Pavlova notes the growing interest of the contemporary artists in Western Siberia for ancient cultural traditions. As the basis of their artistic work the authors use mythological motifs and national traditions of their people along with ethnographic, archaeological and historical materials. The author examines the current state of Siberian art within the so-called “Ethnofuturism” tendency in art, which originated in the end of the 1980s. According to the author, this trend is the one that most discovers the essence of modern art. It determines the place of ethnos and its culture in the modern world by the use of the archaic forms. Nevertheless, the author does not attempt to establish any relation of this concept with the content of the works of art.

## **Conclusion**

First of all, among of all the approaches to the phenomenon of ethnicity, constructivism has a certain priority. This is due to the fact that this approach is based on the relevant idea of the symbolic production of ethnicity. It is one of the most actual forms for preservation and maintaining ethnic identity in our days.

Secondly, the study of a number of ethno-psychological research helped to form the understanding of a positive ethnic identity as a mental construct, as a prerequisite for a stable and independent existence of the ethnocultural group, and as

a norm of inter-ethnic cooperation. Using the concepts of the worldview, ethnic worldview and artistic worldview, this study fills the gap in the literature on ethnic identity, in particular, on constructing a positive ethnic identity that is connected with the nature of consciousness of the individual.

Thirdly, the visual art of the Khakass Republic is of particular interest for the researchers. The prerequisites of the national school origin, the work of the leading masters, their genre preferences, the work techniques and traditions taken up by the Khakass school are being researched. The contemporary scholars consider the national theme in the works of the Khakass masters along with the painter's work overview. Though, no holistic study devoted to the specificity of the ethnic themes visualization in the works of Khakass masters has been undertaken.

Finally, in the light of social changes, despite the abundance of the material on ethnicity, this topic does not fall by the wayside, but is becoming increasingly important. Ethnic issues remain at the heart of the scientific discussions of not only ethnologists and anthropologists, but also fine art experts, culture specialists, political scientists, psychologists and sociologists. However, the issue of the cultural-semiotic construction of a positive ethnic identity, in particular, through the works of fine art as an integral sphere of culture in the studies, is not given enough consideration. Besides, the sign-symbolic forms in the artistic space of art works bear not a less, and often more serious ideological load, participating in the construction of an ethnic identity.

Taking into account the symbolic nature of the reproduction of ethnicity, the next chapter offers to consider the basic principles of the cultural-semiotic approach and the methodological basis for the further study of the mechanisms of constructing a positive ethnic identity in the symbolic "field" of artistic practices.

## CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

This chapter examines the methodological bases of the cultural-semiotic approach, describes the history of this approach's development briefly, and then offers a unique systematization of its main principles taking into account constructivism ideas in relation to the symbolic "field" of art.

### **A Brief History of Development of the Cultural-Semiotic Approach**

The cultural-semiotic approach appeared on the basis of philosophical hermeneutics and linguistic concepts, in particular, the sign theory by Ferdinand de Saussure. The founder of semiotics as a general theory of sign structures is the American philosopher, logician, mathematician, philosopher and natural scientist Charles Sanders Peirce (1839-1914). He was the first to create the classification of signs, highlighting iconic, natural and conventional signs. The further development of the semiotic approach is associated with the studies by L. Wittgenstein, H.G. Gadamer, R. Montague, Ch. Morris, R. Carnap, S. Kripke, L. Tarsky, etc. The Russian school of semiotics started developing in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In the early 1960s, the Moscow-Tartu semiotic school that united scientists from Tartu, Moscow, Yerevan, Riga, Vilnius and others cities was formed. The school became the leading national school that developed the principles of structural analysis of culture. The scientists' interest was focused on the problem of formation and functioning of the sign systems in human society. One of the leading representatives of the Moscow-Tartu school and the founder of modern semiotics is the Soviet literary theorist and cultural studies scholar Yu.M. Lotman (1922 – 1993). The Tartu structural-semiotic school dominated in the 1960s and 1970s, in the 1980s there was a noticeable decline and in the 1990s the school practically ceased existing, but the ideas of its theorists both as a foreign semiotic school and a Russian one are still relevant for the contemporary cultural studies. Thus, N.L. Malinina (2010) devotes her research to the analysis of Yu.M. Lotman's structural and semiotic ideas. M.S.

Inkizhekova understands a traditional ethnic culture text as a way of learning cultural traditions and worldviews of particular peoples (Inkizhekova, 2009). The substantive aspect of a cultural text, its meaning-making and representativeness are studied by T. Wijk (2011), F. Tenbruk (2013) and E. Fen (2010). For this work the studies of ethnic art are also important. Ethnofuturism as a trend of modern art became a topic of researches by V.O. Hartig (2006), E.P. Matochkin (2009), L.I. Nekhviadovich (2010) and E.Y. Pavlova (2007). It should be noted that since the early 20<sup>th</sup> century there has been a “cultural turn” in the humanities towards consideration of culture structures as phenomena that form meanings of “definite cultural manifestations and activity types” (Wijk, 2011). The issue of generating of sociocultural sense-making function by cultural practices became particularly relevant in the last decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> – early 21<sup>st</sup> century due to the phenomena of globalization and multiculturalism (Kistova, Koptseva, Reznikova, Semenova et al., 2015). One of the tools for decoding sign constructions of cultural practices is the cultural-semiotic approach whose principles are the subject of this chapter.

### **Systematization of the main Principles of the Cultural-Semiotic Approach**

Based on the theoretical studies and the analysis of the results of the researchers, who study the semiotics of culture, the methodological principles of the cultural-semiotic approach will be put in order.

#### **Principle of Culture understanding as a Structure consisting of a Series of Symbolic Systems and Cultural Texts**

The first methodological principle of the cultural-semiotic approach is *understanding culture as a structure consisting of a series of symbolic systems and cultural texts*. According to the sociologists Jeffrey Alexander and Philip Smith, cultural structures should be understood semiotically. “According to our hypothesis, the culture should be thought of as a structure consisting of symbolic systems.

Symbols are signs that have the status of generalization and provide categories for understanding the elements of social, individual and organic life” (cited by Wijk, 2011). Pierre Bourdieu considers the nature of these structures, “Social agents construct social reality through cognitive structures that can be applied to all the objects in the world ...” (Bourdieu). These objects are symbolic systems that constitute the core of “dramatized document” cultural texts (C. Geertz). According to this principle, art in general and a work of art in particular, represent a secondary informative sociocultural text that is, like any other text, according to the logic of Yu.M. Lotman, has a specific language structure and internal organization. Reconstruction of this “document”, according to Ph. Smith and J. Alexander (2010), is of great importance for understanding of the impact that culture has on social life’s formation. J. Alexander and Ph. Smith, the authors of a new approach in cultural sociology – “a strong programme” believe that “internal senses” of cultural texts not only function in society, but also have a modelling effect on social life, i.e. in some sense direct our activities. Scientists who supported hermeneutic and semiotic understanding of culture separate culture and social structure believing that culture is a relatively autonomous beginning, participating in the reproduction of social relations (Alexander, Smith, 2010).

Extrapolating the aforementioned theoretical model of culture as a collection of texts on socio-cultural reality, it is possible to identify a number of cultural texts, which play an important role in a society life. These are cultural-semiotic practices by which we mean the amount of social actions in which sign-symbolic forms of culture that carry certain social values and meanings are produced, preserved and transmitted. Mentioning these cultural-semiotic practices we mean art, cinematograph, mass media, political discourse, art criticism, etc. These texts represent informative structure that actively functions within society.

## **Principle of Symbol Creation, actualized in the Artistic Dialogism**

The second principle of the cultural-semiotic approach is *the principle of symbol creation, actualized in the artistic dialogism*.

The main idea of this principle is “symbol”. This category is of great scientific interest. Different aspects of a symbol are studied. These are both ontogeny of a symbol and its cognitive function and, unlike a sign and a symbol, its hermeneutics, and the symbolic nature of culture. Our interest is focused on the role of a symbol in relation to the field of art. It is known that art is symbolic and allows portraying an ideal that, according to Kant, is the highest purpose of art (Basin, 2012, 22). I. Kant interprets the concept of “symbol” as beauty, lovely presentation of things and an image given in the “corporal representation”. A symbol in art, according to Kant, is a symbolic form, which expresses and communicates aesthetic ideas (ibid.). According to E.A. Orlova, “in every studied and observed society certain areas of ordering are found, where interaction and communication are specially organized and have specific symbolic expression” (Orlova, 2004, 153). The author is referring to a system of symbols designed to organize the relation of a man with the world around. The founder of semiotics Ch.S. Pierce notes that an action of a symbol is based on the fact that information, encoded in it will be understood in a certain way by a person who interprets it (Pierce, 2000). According to N.L. Koretskaya, the ability of a symbol to fixation, storage and transfer of information provides its close connection with the traditions, rites and customs, and through them “a system of symbols is included into national consciousness” (Koretskaya, 1998). Yu.M. Lotman believes that a symbol has a quality to accumulate, consolidate and transmit information over many generations, acting as a keeper of non-genetic, cultural memory of the people, rooted in the depths of the archaic (Lotman, 1996).

In this regard, the national art of Siberia with the current archeoart (or ethnofuturism) movement can be seen as a symbolic and conceptual art. Archeoart (ethnofuturism) is an art movement within the contemporary art in Siberia, which originated in the late 1980s. It is the movement that most of all reflects the essence of

the contemporary Siberian art, in which the place of the ethnos and its culture in the modern world is determined by the archaic forms (Pavlov, 2007). Artists use mythological motifs, national traditions of their people, as well as ethnographic, archaeological and historical materials as a basis of artistry. Thus, archeart, or ethnofuturism, enables art works to construct a "deep", "genuine" ethnicity, based on archetypes, by artistic means. V.I. Surikov is considered to be a forerunner of the Siberian archeart. G.I. Gurkin, V.F. Kapel'ko, V.N. Kyzlasov, S.P. Lazarev, I.I. Ortonulov, N.Ia. Tretyakov, M.P. Chevalkov and others created their works in this direction. The conceptual basis for the artists' appeal to archeart lies in "striving to come into contact again with the maternal warmth of the Earth, with those myths that created natural being" (Matochkin, 2009, 10). In addition, through the legacy of the past the artists try to comprehend the cultural space of Siberia and archeart becomes one of the means of its comprehension. In this case, the task of an artist is to create a new spiritual space of modernity through references to the past.

According to the modern theory of art, symbol creation presents both during the process of a piece of art creation and in the process of a viewer's communication with a product. According to V.V. Bychkov's opinion, symbolization is understood as a dialogic process of "creativity – perception – co-creation", with an artistic symbol in its center, and a deep meaning of the symbolized (metaphysical reality) "shines through" it, and it is fully actualized only in the artistic symbol (Bychkov, 2012). Bychkov defines artistic symbol as a core of the artistic image that expresses a certain reality, which is realized only in the process of aesthetic perception of a particular work of art by a particular recipient in his/her inner world. In his article "Symbolization in Art as an Aesthetic Principle" Bychkov differentiates the concepts of "symbol" and "symbolization". A symbol is the result of symbolization, the expression of a reality in a definite form. The process of artistic symbolization, according to the author, is a multilevel dynamic system that includes metaphysical reality – artistic expression (creativity) – a work of art – aesthetic perception of a product by a recipient. The scientists emphasizes that artistic symbolization includes in its field not only the act of artistic creation (symbolization in the narrow sense is

creating of a work of art as a kind of symbol, located outside reality), but also the process of aesthetic perception as a unique personal actualization of a symbol.

In other words, the symbolization of the text of culture is revealed either in the process of "joint operational efforts of the artist and the artistic material" (Zhukovskii, 2004, 118), or the joint efforts of the recipient and the artistic image of the work. According to G.N. Lola, "the communicative reality of art creates and supports the exchange of meanings between the interacting entities through produced impressions. In turn, such an exchange is synchronous with the alignment of the general semiotic space in which consistency and understanding are possible" (Lola, 2011, 39-40). This understanding of communication is presented in the paradigm of social constructivism, which develops the idea of the reality, being created as a result of everyday interactions, semantic interpretations and reinterpretations. The author adheres to the ideas of constructivism, including the symbolic nature of this interaction, "the cultural context of a work of art takes place in the communicative reality and is created by it" (ibid, 40). G.N. Lola proposes to use the term of the narrative canon for understanding the tools of constructing the reality. According to the researcher, the narrative canon is a "dynamic semiotic structure, organized around a semantic core, ... it is a way of the organization and existence of a communicative resource of an art product" (ibid).

In the communication process the individual enters a new dimension of the reality, transforming colorful strokes, presented in the artistic space of a work of art, into sign and symbolic forms, thanks to what the individual artistic worldview is constructed. In the process of a dialogue and communication with the text of culture the individual becomes aware of such discrimination as *own / another, us / them*. According to S.V. Kardinskaya, it allows revealing ethnicity, i.e. the individual constructs the image of their community, the ethnic worldview. While constructing a complete worldview, the individual considers the world around, the society and oneself, thereby gaining a sense of ownership and the integrity of oneself as a member of society.

Thus, the ability of symbols to have definite meanings, as well as possibility of their reading and understanding, makes them the texts of culture. According to C.J. Geertz, it is necessary to study not the ontological status of the phenomena of our world, but their value, i.e. consider them in terms of their symbolic manifestation. Symbol creation both as the process of a cultural text creation and its perception by a subject involves disclosure of a specific message. In the sphere of art this message is often introduced by archaic representations acting as symbols.

### **Principle of Culture Representativeness and the Symbolic Interpretation of the Signs of Culture**

The third principle is connected with *culture representativeness and the symbolic interpretation of the signs of culture*.

The symbolic nature of cultural texts determines a representative character of culture in general. F. Tenbruk defines representativeness of culture in its intermediary role. He writes, “Culture is representative, i.e. it produces ideas, meanings and values, which act due to their de facto recognition. It covers those beliefs, views, world view, ideas and ideologies that affect social action as they are actively or passively separated or accepted” (Tenbruk, 2013: 101). Cultural codes that provide transference of social experience and information are universal means of representation, structural organization and transference of cultural experience, information and values. The fundamental role of a cultural form in these processes is found in the fact that it manifests itself as a message and a text.

An appeal of cultural texts to an individual and society in general generates a “response back” from the viewer. In the epoch of modernity practice of interpretation becomes especially important. According to Vattimo, we live in “the era of interpretation”, and religion and faith give it to us (cited by Rzaeva, 2011). R.O. Rzaeva notes that attention to the interpretative nature of culture is determined by the fact that postmodern consciousness is based on the interpretive mind. According to the researcher, symbolic representations act as a reaction to attitudes and beliefs that

exist in society and serve as an identifier of “the Other” in the postmodern society, which is associated with the postmodern perception of the text as an infinite chain of denotation (Rzaeva, 2011). The cultural text is interpreted by a subject as a “behavioral code”. “The subject of postmodernism prefers possibility of existence under the proposed code to individual freedom” (ibid.).

### **Concept of value**

The fourth principle of the cultural-semiotic approach is defined by *the concept of value* as one of the key in the conception of the semantic philosophy of art.

Cultural texts are significant for an individual and society due to content they represent. As a result of analysis of the works of art created by representatives of indigenous peoples, it is possible to consider sign-symbolic forms of works as an expression of a society’s values that constitute the core of their culture. E.Y. Basin defines the aesthetic value as kalos – harmony, unity and integration of parts of the whole in a work of art. According to Basin, the world of aesthetic qualities or values is the world of eternal objects outside of time and space (Basin, 2012, 267).

In short, the value may have various forms of expression: from material objects to some mental constructs, characterized by a timeless character. All that is included in the spiritual basis of culture can be referred to such constructs, especially religion, art, vital landmarks.

Since our interest concerns artistic practices of indigenous peoples of Siberia, we separate ethnocultural values that define representative character of the national art, and give the following definition:

*Ethno-cultural values are a definite, formed in the historical dynamics of ethnos, socio-cultural construct that embodies especially significant views of an ethnocultural group.*

This definition emphasizes the peculiarity of the system of values of ethnocultural groups. With regard to the idea of constructing a positive ethnic identity, we believe that it is ethnic and cultural values, embodied in the sign and

symbolic forms of the ethnic culture, that are able to re-create a positive image of a particular ethnic community in the mind of the individual and society in general. What is this ethnocultural system of values, does it manifest itself through some sign and symbolic forms of the ethnic culture? The fourth chapter will try to answer these questions.

## **Summary**

The cultural-semiotic approach as a methodological basis for the study of the mechanisms of constructing a positive ethnic identity suggests a certain model of the relationship of culture as a number of symbolic texts of a subject, which can be both an individual and a social organism in general. According to this approach, the representative and interpretative nature of texts of culture is updated during the creation of symbols, artistic communication. The mechanism of symbolization is shown in the artist's using a specific system of sign and symbolic forms, actualized in the process of a dialogue with the recipient. As a result of this dialogue (between the sign and symbolic texts of culture and the recipient), the worldview, based on the primary archetypal valuable constructs expressing a symbolic "return to some state before the effect of "the foreign", is modelled (Kardinskaya, 2005). In relation to the ethnic culture, it is allowed to talk about ethnic values, which may not form the basis of the modern culture of the ethnic community, often acquiring the status of unclaimed values in the conditions of ethnocultural groups' representatives living among another dominant community. However, the awareness of the possibility to recreate these values by means of cultural-semiotic practices can serve as a powerful factor of the identity of both the individual and the ethnic community in general in a multicultural system of the modern society.

## CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

This chapter examines the constructivist possibilities of artistic practices. The review of literature helped to identify artistic practices in general, and national fine art in particular, as those representative texts of culture that embody the possibility of the construction of ethnocultural values, and therefore, the construction of a positive image of the ethnic community. Philosophical and art analysis of the art by indigenous peoples of Siberia helps to explore and expand upon constructing a positive ethnic identity of artistic practices. The chapter examines which cultural-semiotic mechanisms of artistic practices take part in the construction of a positive ethnic identity. To analyze the importance of artistic practices, first of all, the chapter examines its meaning in the context of the cultural-semiotic approach. Then it focuses on the visual image of a deer in the work of the representatives of the indigenous and low-numbered peoples of Siberia by examining the primary constructs, primeval ethnic and cultural values that are used by artists. Next, the works address the Khakass fine art by looking over how the ethnic theme is presented throughout the entire period of the development of the fine art in Khakassia (1920-2000s). Finally, it addresses the analysis of constructivist opportunities of paintings and graphic works by Khakass artists.

### **Artistic Practices demonstrating Indigenous Ethnocultural Values**

In this study, artistic practices are understood as a number of cultural texts, in which social values and meanings are embodied, stored and conveyed in sign and symbolic forms. These cultural texts include visual arts (decorative and applied arts, fine arts, sculpture, and architecture), folklore, and music. By means of image-symbolic forms, artistic practices often contain serious ideological content, participating, for example, in the construction of an ethnic identity. The choice of artistic practices in the consideration of the construction of an ethnic identity is caused by the fact that in comparison with politics, law, science, religion and other

spheres of public life, they pay a particular attention to the ethnocultural form, i.e., a plane of expression of a particular artistic practice, and a plane of its content. It is artistic practices that record some people's attitudes of value and its traditions in their works, being the most important part of the spiritual culture. Thus, artistic practices acquire the status of a secondary constructing system, embodying already existing and functioning primary constructs, which contain ethnocultural values.

### **Visual Image of a Reindeer in the Works by Indigenous and Low-numbered peoples of Siberia**

One of the most striking examples showing the construction of a primary construct of a nation's social life by means of artistic practices is the image of a reindeer. This image is represented in a variety of sign and symbolic ethnocultural forms of the indigenous and low-numbered peoples of Siberia, from the heroic epic to the fine ethnoart. The reindeer is the main character of both verbal and visual texts. It is represented in its various versions, from domestic, wild, riding heroic to spiritual guides, intermediaries between the human world and the world of the gods. Our interest was focused mainly on the visual ethnoart: painting, drawing and carving art. The visual image of a reindeer is present in works by Nenets artists I.K. Vylka and L.A. Lar, Dolgan artist B.N. Molchanov, and bone carver V.S. Kirgizov, also Yakut artists N.V. Nikolaeva and A.A. Osipova. By analyzing works featuring reindeer, we were able to group them into two categories: 1) artwork using the reindeer image as a guide, chaperone or spirit medium. Such characteristics are expressed from two perspectives. On the one hand, a reindeer acts as a man's guide through daily life; and on the other hand, as a guide in a religious or mythological sense; 2) genre-specific landscape artwork.

The first group includes artwork featuring scenes from a reindeer herder's life. The most frequent subject matters are going hunting and returning home. Representative of this category are bone carvings by V.S. Kirgizov, such as "After the Bride" (mammoth tusk, metal) (see Figure 1), "Into the Tundra" (mammoth tusk,

stone) (see Figure 2), “Astride a Reindeer” (mammoth tusk, amber) (see Figure 3), “Hunting Time” (mammoth tusk, amber, reindeer antler) (see Figure 4), “On the Way Home” (mammoth tusk) (see Figure 5), “Little Reindeer Herder” (mammoth tusk, mammoth rib) (see Figure 6); paintings by B.N. Molchanov, such as “A Sleigh Caravan” (1989) (see Figure 7), “A Sleigh Caravan in the Mountains” (1989) (see Figure 8), a series of works by a Yakut artist A.A. Osipova “The Way of Life” (2010) (see Figure 9), “The North” (2010) (see Figure 10) and others. Most of the time, the character’s personality is unspecific. It is rather a generalized ethnic image of a man wearing his national winter clothing. Any identifying details are omitted. The only item accompanying the character is his weapon which identifies him as a reindeer herder, a generalized representative of the herder community. Most often, a reindeer herder is depicted astride a reindeer. This kind of composition visually creates vertical and horizontal adjoining lines that deliver a sense of balance, stability, and overall compositional unity. A man and his reindeer meet in a halfway world and become alike.

The reindeer image in a religious/mythological context can be found in painting by L.A. Lar, such as “The Climb, Out for a Visit” (2001), “The Long-Awaited Guest” (2001), “Num’s Eyes” (1992) (see Figure 11), and bone carvings by V.S. Kirgizov, such as “Shamanic Ritual” (mammoth tusk) (see Figure 12), “The Wild One” (mammoth tusk, stone) (see Figure 13), “Motherhood” (mammoth tusk), and others.

“Num’s Eyes” (1992) by L. A. Lar depicts a shaman tapping his drum in the foreground and Num’s Eyes looking ahead, in the background. What links the characters in their dialogue is the shaman’s most vital accessory, the drum (“penzer”), a musical instrument which brings together a number of symbolic concepts reflecting the complexity of the Nenets’ and the Dolgans’ religious beliefs. The key concept comes from the drum itself. The drum symbolizes a reindeer that the shaman rides on land, up into the sky or down into the underworld. The reindeer is a mediator between the man’s world and the gods.

The idea of blessing the reindeer with religious powers can also be traced in bone carving. Small size, generalized features, snow-white figures, and the Nenets' and the Dolgans' religious worldview (worshiping the reindeer as their sacred ancestor, patron, and Nature's perfect creation) make images of the reindeer feel like religious artwork. Of special importance are reindeer antlers. Following the Nenets' idea of afterlife, reindeer antlers are traditionally left at the herder's burial place so that he could continue herding in another world (see "Antlers on the Hill", "The Sacred Place" (2007), "The Place of Sacrifice", and other works by L.A. Lar). A typical example is also a diptych "Reindeer" (2013) by N.V. Nikolaeva (see Figures 14, 15). The artist turns to depicting the sacred animal using certain symbolic signs. It is a specific way of communication with the viewer, forcing him to pay attention to the sacral functions of this animal. Due to annual renovation of its horns, reindeer became a symbol of renovation, revival, fertility of human and nature as a whole. In one word, all life of people living in the Siberian Arctic is connected to this animal.

Genre-specific landscape paintings are represented in works by B.N. Molchanov, namely, "The Reindeer Run" (1983) (see Figure 16), "In the Avam Tundra" (1986) (see Figure 17), "A Sleigh Caravan in the Mountains" (1989) (see Figure 18), "The Putoranas in Spring" (1991) (see Figure 19), "Spring in the Putoranas" (1992), "Treading the First Snow, and Reindeer Running". Walking or running reindeer are among the key motifs. These motifs unfold in the Nature, which is traditionally viewed by the Nenets and the Dolgans as the Mother of all living beings. The reindeer typically cover only a small part of the canvas. Similar color schemes used for the natural environment and the reindeer combined with a soft contour create an image where the characters appear at one with Nature. It is as if the reindeer were part of the source of Nature. It is not coincidental that the reindeer often move towards the center of the image. The signs and symbols used in the artwork carry the idea of unity in Nature where all living beings become its integral and, at the same time, dependent part.

Today's artistic identity practices are also ethnic. A distinguishing feature of the Nenets', the Dolgans', the Yakut' visual artwork is that it represents the signs and

symbols associated with the primeval, traditional ethnic and cultural values which are partly lost in this day and age. As an example, the following primeval ethnic and cultural values are used by artists: the man and the reindeer coexisting in harmony, a special religious status assigned to the reindeer, a single ethnic and cultural worldview foundation, including the image of unity between all living beings and Eternal Nature.

## **Constructing a Positive Ethnic identity in the Khakass fine art**

### Methodology

The methodological basis of the study is a social constructivism and the cultural-semiotic approach. The reference to the principles of constructivism is conditioned by the fact that, first of all, the study adheres to the idea of the symbolic production of ethnicity, secondly, takes into account the idea of constructivists about a conscious creation (by a social organism or individual entities) of an intellectual construct presenting an ethnic feeling and representations and doctrines formed in its context.

The reference to the cultural-semiotic approach allowed considering art as a secondary constructing system, manifested through the sign and symbolic forms of fine art.

The research interest in the Khakass fine art is conditioned by the fact that the Khakass ethnocultural group is one those few peoples among the indigenous peoples of Siberia, which has formed an art school presented by a constellation of Khakass artists. This suggests that there is a sufficiently large "bundle" of paintings and graphic works made by artists from the Khakass ethnocultural group.

In order to conduct a philosophical-art analysis, the paintings and graphic works of art made by Khakass artists throughout the entire period of the development of the fine art in Khakassia were selected (1920-2000s).

It is necessary to explain the principles of selecting the material for the study. Graphic works and paintings for the analysis were selected in accordance with specific criteria. The most significant of them included the paintings' creation time and the theme of works. The works of fine art created throughout the development of the Khakass fine art and visualizing the ethnic theme, in one way or another way expressing a positive image of the Khakass ethnocultural group, were of particular interest for this thesis.

The study of the trend in Khakass artists' addressing to the visualization of the ethnic theme is necessary for a further systematization of works of fine art in accordance with the expression of the value system of the ethno-cultural group.

The analysis of the visual material suggests a lot of points of view, inevitable disputes about the "truth" and subjectivity of findings, as "the view of the world depends on the position of the subject" (Bourdieu). Therefore, it is important to rely on the objective knowledge of the principles of the fine art's theory. Based on this, the study will turn to the mechanisms of constructing a positive ethnic identity of the Khakass ethnocultural group in the works of art.

### **Ethnic Theme in the History of the Khakass fine art development**

The Khakass visual art has gone through a long way of formation and development. And all throughout its development, the artists' appeal to the ethnic themes can be observed. According to the tendency of the Khakass artists to appeal to the ethnic theme, the first phase of the development of the national visual art in Khakassia falls on the 1920-1940s.

In sociocultural terms this period is complex and unstable. V.A. Asochakov calls it a period of "breaking up the old and the beginning of the construction of a new socialist culture" (Asochakov, 1983: 31). M.P. Chebodaeva defines the 1920s as "the cultural revolution" (Chebodaeva, 2008: 4). By 1920, the level of the culture of Khakasians had been fairly low. 1917 made a contribution into the culture of Khakassia. In 1917, Khakasians as a nation did not even have a title. They were

officially called "aliens" or artificially separated by the names of the carriers of the individual dialects of the Khakass language, such as the Kacha, the Sagai, the Kyzyl, etc. They did not have their own written language, consequently, did not have their own literature and schools. Schools mostly of a parochial type were not popular among the local population, which means we cannot talk about any level of education here. According to statistics, in 1917, about 9/10 of school-age children remained out of school (Chebodaeva, 2008). After the Great October Socialist Revolution the cultural progress of the peoples began, the first decrees of the Soviet government provided the conditions for the radical transformation of the culture of the peoples of Russia. Of course, it imposed certain obligations on workers in culture, in particular, they were to "serve" for the benefit of the state and party bodies and contribute to the "construction" of a unified Soviet nation. Till the early 1950s, the cultural and educational work in Khakassia was characterized by the dependence on the guidelines of the state and party bodies in the center and regions, according to which a person was a mere appendage to the economic base. In ethnic minority areas, including Khakassia, this guideline was shown in almost a complete disregard of the ethnic specificity. This was manifested in cutting down the production of national musical instruments and books in the language of the autonomous population, and so on. However, despite these negative factors, there were some obvious positive trends in the development of the cultural life of the Khakass ethnos. The development of the Khakass language and, as a consequence, the formation of the Khakass written language can be called one of the most notable events (1925). According to V.A. Asochakov, immediately after the victory of the Soviet power, some competent Khakasses wrote poems and plays in the Khakass language using the Russian alphabet (Asochakov, 1983). The creation of the Khakass writing and publication of the first books in the Khakass language (1926) and the issues of the newspaper "Khyzyl aal" (1927) and "The Soviet Khakassia" (1930) were the events that marked not only the beginning of the development of Khakass literature, but also the formation of fine art, especially book graphics. Already in the 1930s along with the artists from Altai, Krasnoyarsk, Novosibirsk and Moscow, the local authors took part

in the design of the first books. Due to the expansion of the functioning of the Khakass language, book graphics became the leading form of art in Khakassia at that time. It was a means of delivering the bases of the Khakass literacy to the population through accessible and clear illustrations for the reader. The availability is expressed in addressing of graphic artists to the visualization of the characters of books with a national appearance and ethnic attributes. Women, for example, were portrayed in the national Khakass costumes, in hats, while Khakass men were portrayed with a national instrument that is chatkhan and other attributes.

Some of these works are P.S. Afanasyev's illustrations for "The book to read" by K.S. Todyshev (1928), G.A. Atknin's illustrations for "Mal-Khalari" by E.F. Ivanov (1935), as well as R.S. Ananyin's illustrations for "How the land changed into silver" (1958).

During the Great Patriotic War (1941-1945) the art of Khakassia acquired the character of mass propaganda art and came close to the poster by its artistic means. However, these works have not survived. Most of the artists went to the front, many of them never returned. These are K.T. Soldatov, V.P. Losev, E.A. Tishchenko, N.P. Chebodaev and many others.

Thus, in the 1920s-1940s the visual art of the Khakass ethnos had mainly applied nature. The leading role belonged to book graphics, which became the base for the artists' appeal to the ethnic theme and the realistic Khakass art in general. It is impossible to carry out a sufficient research of the specificity of the ethnic theme visualization in the works created in the 1920s-1940s.

The second period of the Khakass visual art development and, therefore, the tendency of the artists' appeal to the ethnic theme covers the 1950s-1980s.

During that period the positive trends in the development of the culture of Khakassia continued to develop. The reforms that began after the death of Stalin, were an attempt to break the command-bureaucratic methods of management in culture, entrenched in the late 1930s-early 1940s, which resulted in creating more favorable conditions for its development. Culture ceased to be synonymous with ideology. During the thaw period 4 cultural centers, 24 community clubs, 40 libraries,

including 6 urban, 94 film projectors were built (Lyubimtseva, 1999). There was a slight increase in education among the Khakasses. According to O.Iu. Lyubimtseva, most of the staff of cultural and educational institutions had no special education. According to the researcher, at the beginning of the 1950s only 5.1% of 196 experts had a Graduate Certificate of Specialised Secondary Education. The main purpose of the whole system of cultural and educational institutions was the organization of leisure for people, including artistic activities, the work of recreational and leisure parks, museums, cinemas, theaters.

In 1953-1965 there was a significant shift in the training of cultural and educational institutions of Khakassia. The number of employees, most of whom had certificates of secondary specialized and higher vocational education, increased. A great contribution to the training of personnel was made by Abakan School of Music, which became the base for the formation of the personnel for the national culture. There were performers playing Khakass musical instruments, singers of throat singing. There was a constellation of artists and masters of applied art. However, the number of these professionals was limited, and then their role was unobtrusive.

An important phenomenon of the late 1950s - early 1960s was All-Russian festivals of amateur creativity. They pretty much stepped up the rural amateur performances, brought out the best creative teams. Khakass national specific features began manifesting more clearly in the content and forms of activities of cultural and educational institutions, especially in the work of theaters and museums. The traditions of the Khakass ethnos began to revive in the language, music, dance, book publishing. In the context of our study, the second period of the development of the fine art of Khakassia is remarkable for the fact that it was the time (the 1950s-the 1980s) of the development of the national school. It was promoted by a number of cultural events. Among them we should mention regular participation of Abakan artists in the regional exhibitions starting from the 1940s (A.M. Novoselov, P.P. Sarychev, K.T. Soldatov, I.I. Riaskin, R.K. Ruiga, D.P. Cherepanov), opening the regional branch of *Artist Cooperative Partnership* in Abakan in 1953, which consisted of more than 20 people at that time. In addition, in the 1950s the foundation for the

development of many genres of easel painting, which occupies a leading position in the artistic culture of Khakassia, was laid. The main genres were small-format landscape, plot-thematic painting, still-life and portrait. In fact, the leading painting genres, in which Khakass artists would create, were formed. In the 1960s-1980s in the painting of Khakassia the landscape played the leading role. In landscapes painters sought to convey the beauty of their native land, its nature. In short, the image of the motherland became leading.

This period includes the first paintings visualizing the national ethnic motives. These are the works of the 50s, such as “A Khakas Girl Reading a Book” (1952) by A.M. Novoselov (1917-1997), “Khakass Warriors” (1958) by P.I. Sarychev (1919-1998) and the paintings of A.A. Topoev (1925-1997). In the paintings of the 1950s A.A. Topoev visualizes the ethnic theme by depicting the festivals of the Khakass people (“Wedding in the Ulus”, 1957; “Carnival”, 1958) and the motives of national legends (“The Song of Haidzhi”, 1958; “The Singer at the House of Rich Landowners”, 1958). In the 1970s-1980s the ethnic theme in the works of A.A. Topoev was expressed through the image of episodes from the history of the Khakass people. In particular, these are the episodes of the Civil War and the Great Patriotic War (“Gaidar in Khakassia”, 1976; “The Soldier Came Back”, 1985) and the collective and political repressions (“A Farewell to the Shaman”, 1957; “Excluded by the People”, 1980; “A Farewell to the Shaman”, 1984).

Subsequently, the ethnic theme in the works by Khakass masters began to occupy the leading position. Almost every genre of visual art could contain some national motive, no matter whether it was a portrait, for example, works by M.A. Burnakov (1933-1977) or a still life, like works by A.Z. Asochakova (born 1939).

Vladimir Alexandrovich Todykov's creations are no less significant for the formation of the national school in Khakassia. According to the researchers, he made a great contribution to the development of the national art style. His principal creations are illustrations for Khakass heroic legends, like “Aydolay” (1963), “Oh Chibek Aryg” (1968), “Khan Mirgen” (1969), “Altyn Taichi” (1973), “Hara Hushun” (1977), “Altyn-Aryg” (1987) and “Hay Huuchyn” (1991).

Thus, in 1950s-1980s the formation of the national school took place. Easel painting that established the national theme as a priority area of artistic creation became the leading genre. The creative individuality of many artists was formed; the works that filled the niche of the national art school were created. Many artists participated in various exhibitions that helped the Khakass art to overcome the former gap to the Soviet art.

The third stage of the visual arts development in Khakassia falls on the modern 1990-2000s.

At the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (1991) Khakassia acquired the status of the republic. At the same time the artistic culture of Khakassia started a new stage of its development, namely the Union of Artists of Khakassia (1991) was established, cultural centers (Khakass, Tatar, German) were formed, Russian and National Drama Theatres became independent, the Theatre of Short Plays "Chitigen" acquired the status of the state theatre.

Among the conditions that caused the flourish of visual art in Khakassia are vast cultural and educational activities in the Republic. It is manifested in the opening of the various exhibition sites, like the Local Republican Museum of Regional Studies, N.G. Domozhakov National Library, Khakass State University, Abakan exhibition hall «Gearki», Urban Art Galleries of Minusinsk, Chernogorsk, Shushenskoye Art Gallery and other facilities. Besides, in 2000 at the Artists' Union (AU) conference the local authorities of Abakan approved a program for holding competitive exhibition called "Golden Brush" that would be open for artists all over Siberia. Upon the initiative of A.E. Ulyanov, the chairman of AU, since 2004 open air festivals have been organized for Siberian artists. As a result, a number of exhibitions were held in other Siberian cities. Such active cultural policy indicates the desire of the Khakass for integration into a wider cultural space and the wish to engage other representatives of the artistic life into the cultural space of their ethnic group. On the background of these events, the national culture gains the superior value in the life of the ethnos. It is confirmed by the active interest of Khakass artists

to paint their culture. Being connected to the past is especially important for people. G.G. Kotozhekov determines the artists' appeal to the legacy of the past as follows:

*“In the modern image the original connections with the ancient earth, universal roots of the art, world of the spiritual experience of the people rise again and again. In the works by contemporary artists the most striking fact is not the play of colors and lines, but the skill of the artist ‘to get use’ to the epoch, to see the prototypes of their heroes, to resurrect their psychological, spiritual outlook and to go a thousand, two thousand years back in their imagination. This striking phenomenon of peculiar vision of ‘the worldview’ is an expression of deep cultural memory of the Siberian peoples”* (Kotozhekov, 1992, 45).

The author notes that the contemporary art appeals to expressing the cultural memory of the Siberian population. Undoubtedly, it is impossible not to agree with it. However, if we take into account the ethno-cultural situation that was in the country in the 1990s, when there was an awareness of the need to preserve and develop the culture of indigenous smaller peoples not only in Siberia, but also in the Far East and the North, the appeal of the artists, the Khakass artists in particular, to the past of their people is explicable. Just an appeal to their “roots” was a definite means to self-identify themselves in the conditions of living among another dominant culture. It became a sort of a “saving bridge” for a small Khakass ethnic group trying to preserve, support and consolidate their national ethnic traditions. Therefore, the appeal to the national theme becomes a priority trend in the artistic culture of the ethnic group, in the field of visual arts in particular.

Within the last two decades the traditional archaic culture of the ethnic group acquired so much significance that it started to play the main role in formation of the artistic style of the Khakass masters. It is no coincidence that today there is a large number of definitions of this modern art trend. Artistic criticism defines it as “mythical”, “historical and cultural”, “Siberian neomythologism”, “Siberian archaeovanguard”, “ethnoarchaic”, “ethnofuturism”, “archaeoart”, “Siberian avant-garde”. In respect of the visual arts in Khakassia, “Siberian avant-garde” is the priority name of this modern trend. According to this tendency, the creative work of

Khakass artists is aimed at the visualization of Khakass mythology, archaeological antiquities and shamanism, its national religion. In accordance with this tendency the ethnic theme gets its further development in the works of the following Khakass artists: M.A. Burnakov (1933-1977), V.F. Kapelko (1937-2000), A.V. Domozhakov (1955-1998), V.M. Novoselov (1924-2006), G.N. Sagalakov (born 1955), R.I. Subrakov (born 1941), A.L. Ulturgashev (born 1955) and V.N. Kyzlasov (born 1965) and others. More detailed research of specific ethnic themes visualization in the paintings by Khakass artists working in the “Siberian avant-garde” mainstream is set forth later under systematization of the works of art.

In that way, the 1990-2000s were the golden era of the artistic life in Khakassia. It can be interpreted as a response to the social and cultural situation which took place in the country at that time. As a result of the fast assimilation process the ethnos’ ideals were being levelled and neglected. It promoted the awareness of the need to maintain ethnic and cultural values, and, therefore, the search of the way to revive the ethnic traditions. Therefore in that period there were lots of trends in the artistic culture not only of Khakass people, but also of other smaller peoples of Russia. However, all these tendencies reflect the essence of one thing – an appeal to the archaic past that carries itself the “purity” that is not absorbed into any “foreign” culture. The most priority tendency in the Khakass art is “the Siberian avant-garde”, which supposes an appeal to legacy of the past (archaeological antiquities, mythology and religion). So, the ethnic issue is the main theme of the works of Khakass artists in the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. And that is a means of self-identification of the ethnos. An archaic material that reflects both material and spiritual traditions of the indigenous population becomes valuable for the artists. The artist Grigory Gurkin, a representative of indigenous peoples of Siberia, Altaian from the family Choros, was one of the first professional artists working in this trend. Then the same line was carried on by the artist Nikolay Yakovlevich Tretyakov from Omsk. In his opinion, the appeal to visualization of archaic forms is the basis of art. He wrote, “... primary art, like life, is the foundation”

(Matochkin, 2009, p.9). The archaism is one of the principles of the ethnic theme imaging in the works of art by Khakass artists too.

After studying the evolution of Khakass artists' addressing to the ethnic theme, it is possible to determine the basic strategies of the construction of a positive ethnic identity of Khakasses. Among them are:

1. The establishment of the national art school with a constellation of artists from the Khakass ethnocultural group.

2. The formation of the history of the Khakass fine art with a specific periodization.

3. The development of the national art in the context of the current artistic practices. The artists form the national art based on the appeal to the existing forms of art (painting and drawing), recognized genres of painting. In specific crisis situations in the country the artists create works on national themes, especially they turn to the theme of war.

4. Entering the mainstream of the development of contemporary art is manifested in the active participation of Khakass artists in the current trends, including participation in the regional exhibition, the organization of the creative union called *Artist*, active collaboration with artists from other cities, following the current trend of artists' appeal to the antiquity of their people.

### **Constructivist Opportunities of Paintings and Graphic works by Khakass artists: systematization of works**

The further research of specificity of the ethnic theme visualization in the works by Khakass artists is connected to the analysis of the works of art. The most important point for the analysis is not the time of creation of the work of art, but the visual way the master appealed to while creating the work. The graphic side of art works by Khakass painters, i.e. the sign and symbolic forms of works of art, which allow considering art as a special cultural and informative text, becomes very important.

The review of the history of the Khakass fine art's development showed that the construction of a positive ethnic identity is secondary in nature, associated with the use of existing artistic practices. One of the priorities is a cultural-semiotic strategy related to the artists' appeal to the antiquity of their people. In the works of art by Khakass authors antiquity finds its expression in the visualization of sign and symbolic forms expressing the traditional ethnocultural values. From the perspective of these values it is possible to systematize the works of Khakass artists.

The first group consists of the works that express a single ethnocultural Khakass ideological framework, in particular, the religious and mythological one.

The basis of artistic creativity for many Khakass artists who visualized the religious and mythological outlook of Khakasses is the findings of archaeological excavations. It may be an image of mountains - "Tashtyp" by F.E. Pronskikh (2001) (see Figure 20) or some certain types of megalithic architecture like menhirs, single vertical stones. These are the artwork "Khakassia" (1977) by M.A. Burnakov (see Figure 21), "Uybatsky Chaa-tas" (1983) by V.F. Kapelko (see Figure 22), "The steppe of Askiz" (1994) by V.M. Novoselov (see Figure 23), "Ancestral Land" (1990) by A.Z. Asochakova (see Figure 24). It may be an image of cromlechs, stone slabs placed in a circle. These are pictorial works "The steppe of Askiz" (1994) by V.M. Novoselov (see Figure 23), "Tepsey" (2002) by G.N. Sagalakov (see Figure 25).

The representation of the mountains and megalithic architecture accentuates the significance of the Khakass religious world outlook, namely the cult of the sacred rock (menhir / slabe) which played an important role in the life of the ethnic group. Almost all the public prayers were called "tayyf" (the victim) and were accomplished on mountain tops or, in any other way, were connected with rocks. Most of them were accompanied by sacrifices of sheep or horses and shamanistic rituals that defined the relationship between the people of the Middle World and the celestials of the Upper World. In the ancient Turkic tradition the image of the Mount is polyfunctional. The Mountain is the ancestor of the whole people or a particular tribal group, it is the center of the developed territory and tribal nomads. These mountains

became the place of origin of tribal cults, Khakass tribal cemeteries were placed on their slopes (Archimacheva, 2010). In addition, as is well-known, the World Mountain is both the Centre and the Axis of the World, the support of the universe. Khakasses associate the symbol of the World Mountain with the mythical mountain range Pulai-syn (Inkizhekova, 2010). According to L.R. Kyzlasov and N.V. Leontiev, the Khakass researchers of the petroglyphs, medieval Khakasses called the sacred rocks “Bengo hai”. It means “The eternal rock” (“The monument is left at the century”) (Kyzlasov and Leontyev, 1988, 65). There was faith in reverence and worship to the natural stone phenomenon as the original form of the national world outlook of the Khakass.

In addition to the reverence of the sacred rocks covered with petroglyphs, in the 19th century and prerevolutionary period there was a widespread cult of the life-giving nature (sky, sun, moon, water, sacred trees and animals). The representation of the artistic space of the painting is an important component of expressing the religious outlook of the Khakass. Landscape was the leading genre throughout the development of visual arts in Khakassia. So an artistic space of the paintings by Khakass artists is presented by landscape depicting some parts of the Khakass Republic, mostly the oldest settlements, like such big villages Askiz and Tashtyp in particular. The theme of nature is represented in the works of virtually every artist. There are works “The steppe of Askiz” (1994) by V.M. Novoselov (see Figure 23), “Top Askiz, reserve” (2000) by G.V. Nikonenko (see Figure 26), “The steppe of Askiz” by V.A. Todykov (see Figure 27), “Tashtyp” (2001) by F.E. Pronskikh (see Figure 20), “Foothills of Tashtyp” (2004) by M.A. Sarajakov (see Figure 28) and others. An appeal to the feature of the Khakass surroundings may be explained as the idea expression of “small homeland” and “one’s own statehood” of Khakass ethnos (Grosheva, 2010). The image of the motherland (Mother - Earth – “Chir-Ine” or Native land - “Chir-Suu”), as well as the image of the Hero (Warrior-Alyp) appears an important interrelated symbol of the Center in the mythological worldview of the Khakass. According to the research of folklore materials, in particular, conducted by V. Butanaev, the residence of the epic hero (Warrior - Alyp) and the territory of his

country are not clearly marked. Based on the results of the study of folklore texts, M.S. Inkizhekova comes to the following conclusions with respect to the image of the Motherland, dominating in the worldview of the Khakass ethnocultural group. The image of the Motherland is represented in comparison with other lands. Foreign lands are represented as "mountains with another form of saddles, rivers with an unusual mouth, dry steppe, where a raven does not stay, cattle of another colour grazes, and the people have different laws and customs, etc." (Inkizhekova 2010, 83). The Warrior - Alyp never lives in foreign lands. His own possessions are "in the pure lands where evil is not found, in quiet places, where there are no diseases and wind does not walk" (ibid). The idea of the Motherland is connected with the concept of home as a kind of sacred center, conditioned the boundary between the natural world and the human world; that is how the relationship of man and the world is modeled. The representatives expressing the idea of home as a sacred center are the paintings "A Sketch with a Yurt" by M.A. Burnakov (see Figure 29) and "A Yurt - the Sun" by (1993) A.V. Domozhakov (see Figure 30).

The artists also use the motives of the rock drawings found in Tagar and Okunev culture, runic inscriptions and shamanic rituals as a thematic basis. For example, there are the following characters found on the rock carvings and stone sculptures in the canvases by Khakass painters: ancient gods (e.g. the Sun God), the sacred horses – "zyzhi", a white she-wolf – "oh puur", deers. These characters are also typical characters of Khakass mythology. They are represented in the works "A Horse (sketch) (see Figure 31), "Yellow horse with spirits" (1993) by M.A. Burnakov (see Figure 32), "Horse-deer" (1994) by A.V. Domozhakov (see Figure 33), "The sacred cow" (1995) by G.N. Sagalakov (see Figure 34), "The face of the Old God" (2000) (see Figure 35), "The Turkic world. The ancient God of Khakasses" (2001) (see Figure 36), "The Turkic world. Khakassia" (2004) (see Figure 37), "The Turkic world. Sacrifice to the Gods" (2004) (see Figure 38) by A.L. Ulturgashev.

It is known that the cult of sacred rocks, covered with ancient petroglyphs was very important for the Khakass people. This cult was accompanied by sacrifices in honor of the spirit-host of the mountain. According to scientists, the rock characters

(tamgas) had a religious significance. They provided the protection of the spirit-host of the mountain, that was Taiga (Taiga in Khakass and Tuvan is a mountain covered with thick coniferous forest), in a person's life. Therefore, the images borrowed from the rock paintings of ancient Khakasses carry religious content. It is no coincidence that the animals revered by the Khakass are the characters of the pictures. For example, there is an image of “Yzyha” which is the personification of the Sun Deity according to the world outlook of Khakasses. The cult of the white horse or solar horse occupied an important place in religious conception of cattle-breeders. The purpose of initiation of the “zyyh” is to ask the Gods for prosperity and health of the livestock.

A deer is another most frequent character of the rock carvings. It becomes one of the main characters of the paintings by Khakass artists. It was conceived as a sacral and sacred animal by Khakasses just like by many other ethnic groups. It was revered as the most valuable hunting prey. However, the deer cult had not only hunting and breeding importance in the life of the Khakass. Due to the annual change of the antlers, the deer became a symbol of renewal and rebirth. In that way, it symbolized fertility of human and nature in general as we mentioned earlier. Therefore the appeal of the Khakass artists to the image of a sacred animal like deer has a symbolic meaning for the Khakass ethnos.

The motives related to the religious worldview of Khakases based on the national religion that is shamanism, are of great importance for the expression of the Khakass religious and mythological worldview. These works of Khakass artists are associated with the visualization of the shaman, immersed in an ecstatic state, as well as with the image of his attributes, environment, namely spirits (*tesi* that is literally basis, essence), without which shamanism is impossible.

Among the selected works are “Seeing off the Shaman” (1954) (see Figure 39), “Seeing off the Shaman” (1984) (see Figure 40) by A.A. Topoev, “The Shaman's Double” (1991) (see Figure 41), “The Shaman” (1991) (see Figure 42) by A.V. Domozhakov, “The Shaman” (1996) by A.L. Ulturgashev (see Figure 43), “Ah ham” (A White Shaman) (2004) by V.N. Kyzlasov (see Figure 44), “The Shaman's Mother-

Animal” (2004) (see Figure 45), “The Flying of the Shaman” (2004) (see Figure 46), “The Flying of the Shaman to the Top World” (2004) (see Figure 47), “An Old Tambourine” (2004) (see Figure 48), “The Tambourine's Tesy” (2004) (see Figure 49) by A.L. Ulturgashev, “The Dance of the Shaman” (2006) by V.N. Kyzlasov (see Figure 50).

The spirits can be represented as zoomorphic and anthropomorphic. They are presented in the form of animals, birds, insects, snakes, vortex, fog, etc. It is an army that is invisible for humans, but it is the basis of shamanic power, the activities of the shaman. The shaman is painted with his tambourine which sets him the rhythm of the entry into the state of shamanistic ritual.

The appeal of the painters to the subject of national religion, shamanism, indicates the importance of the religion in the world outlook of the Khakass ethnos. It is the national religion which serves as one of the factors of the self-identification of the ethnos at the present stage of its development.

The next group includes the works, in the cultural-semiotic form of which the value of specific types of cultural heroes, typical of the Khakass ethnocultural group, is embodied. These are the heroes who showed courage for the sake of their people. It is mainly represented by the graphic works illustrating ancient Khakass heroic legends. First of all, there are series of works “Kok Han”, “Khan Mergen”, “Hubal Aryg”, “Khakass myths and legends” etc. by R.I. Subrakov, and graphic works “Aydolay”, “Oh Chibek Aryg”, “Altyn Taichi”, “Hara Hushun”, “Altyn-Aryg” and “Ay Huuchyn” by V.A. Todykov. The hero Alyp pictured in militant state is one of the main characters of the themed works imaging the Khakass epic. Based on folk sources, M.S. Inkizhekova notes such characteristics of the appearance of the Warrior - Alyp as stateliness of the body, beautiful white face with hawk eyes (Inkizhekova, 2010). As a rule, in the graphic works of art by R.I. Subrakov, the Warrior is represented in a militant state (see Figure 51-55). The character can be represented with horrent arms, holding a sword or galloping on horseback with a spear in his hand. It presents a struggle in which the hero is the main participant. In general, the image of the Warrior - Alyp is a symbol of the cultural hero. Endowed with a number

of functions (the functions of a ruler, a conductor of the sacred will, an intermediary in the relationship with the transcendental sphere), he solves problems to ensure the well-being of the people both in the "cultural" (social), and the "natural" aspects, in particular, he ensures the augmentation of the wealth of his people, and releases it from diseases and natural disasters. The supernatural forces of the Warrior - Alyp are associated with his vitality. When he loses them, crop failures, diseases, disasters start to happen.

In particular, there are some series of xylography illustrations by V.A. Todykov to the book by storyteller – hygeia – S.P. Kadysheva “Oh Chibek Aryg” (see Figures 56-58). These graphic works depict a Khakass girl, Ah Chibek Aryg, who was in the forefront of the struggle of her people to expel the enemies from the country. The military theme is also represented in the works by P.I. Sarychev, particularly in the painting called “The Khakass warriors” (1958) (see Figure 59), the painting “The meeting of Alyps” (1996) by A.L. Ulturgashev (see Figure 60), and the work “The ancient Turks” (2006) by G.N. Sagalakov (see Figure 61). In these paintings the characters are Turks, the ancestors of the Khakass people, and, in fact, Khakasses themselves are portrayed as militant, i.e. in the image of heroes.

The main feature of graphic works is that the line, which is the principal artistic technique, contributes to actualizing the national identity of the character that belongs to the Turkic ethnic group. For this reason, a warrior is endowed with description of a national hero who fought for the sake of his people. So the warrior embodies the national spirit of the ethos. According to B.S. Meilakh (1983), the artist chooses such life situations and conditions for the image of the character, in which emotional movements and behavior impulses hidden in the normal circumstances of everyday routine are most fully manifested. The characters of works directly embody the features of a particular national reality in the form of specific actions, deeds, their manifestations of human feelings. As an ideal representative of the ethnic group, he has the courage and bravery defending his people from foreign influence. This idea can be correlated with the current state of the Khakass people that is under the pressure of Russian culture. The works depicting the fight scene of Khakass heroes

are intended to influence the viewer, each representative of Khakass ethnic group. The objective of each of these works is to increase the hope and faith in the ability of self-preservation of the national and ethnic values.

In the work of Khakass artists the genres of portrait and still life take an important position. The works, created in these genres, embody such ethnocultural values as the idea of an ideal type of Khakass personality (a group of works in the genre of portrait) and the value of especially significant things of the Khakass ethnocultural group (a group of works in the genre of still life) in their cultural-semiotic forms.

Portrait like no other genre is intended to accentuate the value and significance of a person. The Khakass artists paint both single and group portraits. The representatives of this genre are pictorial portrait works “A Khakass girl reading a book” (1950) by A.M. Novoselov (see Figure 62), S.P. Kadyshev's portrait “Hygeia” (see Figure 63), M.A. Burnakov's Portrait “The Khakass Woman Wearing the National Costume (1967) (see Figure 64), “The picture of Shepherd” (1975) by G.S. Khlebnikova (1922-1993), “The Song of Khakassia” (1987) (see Figure 65), “Khakass Costumes” (2003) by N.Y. Kobyltsova (1958) and others.

The representatives of the Khakass ethnic group, both Khakass women and Khakass men, are the characters of the portrait images in most cases. There are no attributes indicating any particular person. It is the representative of the Khakass ethnic group who is so important. Therefore, the external distinctive features of the character are emphasized. Among these, there is a narrow shape of the eyes, an epicanthus, black hair, prominent cheekbones, a diamond / oval shape of the face.

In addition, there are some attributes that indicate belonging to the Khakass ethnos. A Khakass woman is always painted wearing the national dress and a headdress, as a rule, it is a patterned kerchief tied around her head. A Khakass man is usually depicted either with a horse whose cult took an important place in the religious ideas of cattle-breeders, or playing chathane. It is the most common national instrument without which it is impossible to do “hay”, so, without it the most important and leading genre of the Khakass folklore, so-called “alyptyh nymaha”,

would not exist. The art space where the character is represented has a great importance for his identification. In most cases, there is the background of rocky landscape and megalithic architecture, or menhirs. Representation of one character or a group of characters in the natural artistic space and the image of some ancient religious monuments emphasize the complicity of the Khakass to the cult of the sacred rock that exists in the religious world outlook of the ethnos.

Thus, there are no any attributes that would indicate the person depicted in the paintings. So, it is possible to conclude that the portraits by Khakass artists are intended to accentuate the value of the self-awareness of the people as representatives of the Khakass ethnic group. The significance of this idea is supported by artistic means, namely the specific composition of the art space. The character is always presented in the foreground. His or her figure occupies a large plane of the canvas. So the figure of the character is dominant regarding the artistic space of the picture. The ideal type of Khakass personality is modeled. This is a creative personality who respects and shares the traditions, philosophical foundations of their ethnocultural group, thus, being authorized to be a member of an ethnic community.

Cultural-semiotic forms of works, painted in the genre of still life, express the value of things in the traditional way of life of the Khakass ethnocultural group.

Many Khakass artists worked in this genre, but the ethnic issue is mostly presented by still lives by Agrafena Zakharovna Asachakova and Vitaly Nikolaevich Kyzlasov. We can mention such paintings as “Still Life with an Old Pitcher” (1978) (see Figure 66), “Still Life with Ayran” (1980) (see Figure 67), “Still Life with a Jug” (1988) (see Figure 68), “Still Life with a Kettle” (1993) (see Figure 69) by A.Z. Asachakova, and “Still Life with Chathan” (1993) (see Figure 70) by V.N. Kyzlasov.

The objects of the Khakass household become the characters of the art space of the still lives. There are bronze and iron pots, trays, wooden spoons, cups and bowls, leather flasks, mittens, pouches, fur coats and fabrics decorated with national ornament, and tobacco pipes. The tablecloth with national embroidery covering the table is an indispensable attribute of all the still lives by A.Z. Asachakova.

In this case, for the reason of the specificity of the genre, the art space of still life has the purpose to present to the viewer some certain objects of the everyday life of Khakass ethnos. It is the image of the things which are every day for daily life of each Khakass. It enables the artist to represent the nationally significant ethnic ideals by means of the still life genre. The still life offers the viewer to see something familiar to him, the reflection of his culture, by means of the «language» most simple and accessible for the viewers. It affirms the value of the usual things and turns the people to the value of the things that surround them and that can serve as one of the factors for ethnic identification. As G.W.F. Hegel fairly noted, "through ideality art elevates things .... art captures them in their for-itself-being, makes them a purpose and focuses our interest on that what we would be indifferent to in life" (Hegel, 1968, 172).

In the 1990-2000s, the archaic tendency is one of the priority trends in the visual art of Khakassia. A distinctive feature of the modern Khakass art is a trend away from specific sign forms expressing ethnocultural values of Khakasses, towards the increasing universalization of the sign and symbolic forms of the artistic space of paintings. According to S.V. Kardinskaya, the tendency of the "compatibility" of societies, simultaneously actualizing the principle of distinguishing between oneself and others, *us - them*, is implemented through the universalization of images. According to the theorists of constructivism, particular ethnicity manifests in the interaction with other communities. As a specific ethnic identity is expressed through the universality, it is possible to reveal a paradoxical unity, called *the ethnic – the general* by S.V. Kardinskaya (2005).

The work of such artists as G.N. Sagalakov ("The Link of Times" (1995) (see Figure 71), "The World Mountain" (1995) (see Figure 72) and V.N. Kyzlasov ("Three Dimensions" (2005) (see Figure 73), "Eternity" (2005) (see Figure 74), "The Ancient World" (2007) (see Figure 75) is the representative creativity simulating unique cultural symbols for different types of social communications in the iconic and symbolic images.

The artistic space of the painting “Eternity” by V.N. Kyzlasov (2005) (see Figure 72) expresses the idea of the creation of the Universe. In the Khakass’s text of the creation of the Universe the creators of the world are represented as ducks (in the artistic space of the painting they are shown at the top of it), named Ulgen and Erlik-Khan later. They are able to fly, swim, brood on land, exist in all three elements of the three worlds, being the link between them. The painting is dominated by the blue color that can symbolize the presence of water, which embodies the ocean and the eternal movement, from which the sand was taken that was the primary material of the Earth and Man. Cliffs, dwellings of people and animals are depicted at the bottom of the painting in different planes. At the early stage of human development, the animals had not separated from the human collective yet, so in the traditional worldview of Khakasses the animal and plant worlds are closely intertwined with the human world being as significant as the latter. Khakasses descended from animals or birds, plants or trees, each of which is endowed with a meaning as a text. According to the traditional worldview of Khakasses, the horizontal structuring of the Universe, as well as the vertical one, remained important, creating the integrity of the perception of the world.

In the traditional worldview of Khakasses the past is inseparable from the present and the future. This idea was generated by the entire ideological system of the Khakass ethnocultural group. Appealing to symbols and signs contributes to the expression of the idea of *the ethnic – the general* that becomes the guiding principle of life of most indigenous peoples living today among a large number of different ethnocultural groups.

Thus, the cultural-semiotic forms of the works of the national art demonstrate the mechanism by which art is presented as a tool of the secondary sociocultural construction of a positive ethnic identity, using the constructs accumulating the ethnic group's value system as their signs.

## Summary

To sum up, the study of the process of constructing a positive ethnic identity of the Khakass ethnocultural group in the works of fine art led us to the following conclusions.

1. The main cultural-semiotic strategies aimed at the construction of an ethnic identity of Khakasses are the creation of the national art school with a constellation of artists from the Khakass ethnocultural group; the formation of the history of the development of the Khakass fine art with a specific periodization; the development of the national art in the context of the current artistic practices; entering the mainstream of the development of contemporary art.

2. Throughout the development of the fine art in Khakassia we can observe a trend in Khakass artists' appealing to the ethnic theme. The end of the 20<sup>th</sup>-the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, which was the period of an active ethnic identity in the multicultural system, provoked the greatest interest in the visualization of national motives.

3. The priority direction for the visualization of the ethnic theme was an appeal to the antiquity of the Khakass ethnos. At the turn of 20<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup> centuries it took shape of the modern direction of the fine art of Khakassia that is so-called Siberian avant-garde or Siberian style.

4. The analysis of graphic works of art and paintings made by Khakass artists throughout the development of the fine art in Khakassia, has shown that the construction of a positive ethnic identity is secondary in nature associated with the use of already existing cultural sign systems in the form of traditional ethnocultural values, materialized in the works of fine art. The symbolic creation of a positive image of the Khakass ethnocultural group uses the existing specific cultural constructs as a support, whose importance is related to the duration (persistence) of their presence in the ethnocultural group. In accordance with the identified ethnocultural values, the works of Khakass artists have been systemized.

5. We have identified five groups of the works of art corresponding to the expression of a particular ethnocultural value.

a) The 1<sup>st</sup> group consists of works that express a single ethnocultural Khakass ideological framework, in particular, the religious-mythological one.

b) The 2<sup>nd</sup> group is the works whose cultural-semiotic form embodies the value of specific types of cultural heroes, typical of the Khakass ethnocultural group.

c) A separate group of works (the 3<sup>rd</sup> one) are portraits, in which such an ethnocultural value as the idea of the ideal type of Khakass personality is embodied.

d) The 4<sup>th</sup> group includes still-life paintings, expressing the value of especially significant things of the Khakass ethnocultural group.

d) The last (the 5<sup>th</sup> one) group consists of works by contemporary Khakass artists, in which the unique cultural symbols for different types of social communications are embodied in the cultural-semiotic form.

6. The peculiarity of the works of the national fine art is that they mostly represent those cultural-semiotic forms that express the ethnic group's value system, its traditional concepts, i.e. all that forms the core of culture, ethnic constants, allowing the ethnic group to preserve the uniqueness of its culture in the modern, multicultural world. It is important to note that the issue of the construction of a positive ethnic identity through art is dialectical in nature. On the one hand, ethnocultural values, established in the historical dynamics of the ethnic group, have a primordial nature, i.e., they are initially a defined construct that regulates the life of the ethnic group. In other words, it is a primary construct. On the other hand, ethnocultural values, embodied in the works of art, gain a second life as a mental construct, consciously created by the individual (the artist, the viewer) and fixed by means of artistic practices. This is a secondary construct. Thus, works of art carry out the secondary sociocultural construction of a positive ethnic identity, using primary constructs of ethnocultural values as their signs.

## CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

### **Contributions to the Research**

The intent and purpose of the study was to address the possibilities of the construction of a positive ethnic identity in the current artistic practices, one of which is the national art of the Khakass ethnocultural group.

The analysis of modern approaches to the phenomenon of ethnicity, conditioned by the processes of globalization and multiculturalism as well, has identified a certain priority of constructivism. This is due to the fact that this approach is based on the relevant idea of the symbolic production of ethnicity by means of artistic practices. This analysis and the study of a number of ethno-psychological research helped to form the understanding of a positive ethnic identity as a mental construct, as a prerequisite for a stable and independent existence of the ethnocultural group, and as a norm of inter-ethnic cooperation. Along with the concepts positive ethnic identity this study examines the content of such concepts as worldview, ethnic worldview, and artistic worldview as the symbolic forms of the representation of an ethnic identity's mental construct.

The worldview, which is a mental structure constructed by human consciousness, represents the global image lying at the heart of the human worldview. This image represents the essential features of the world, deflected in the consciousness of the individual, the representative of a particular ethnic group that gives an ethnic characteristic to the worldview. Thus, the concept of ethnic worldview emphasizes the connection of the individual's mental structure with the social reality of a particular ethnocultural group.

Taking into account the symbolic nature of artistic practices, especially the perception of works of art by the recipient (it is referred to the emotional component in the structure of the individual, as well as to the cultural level, philosophical and ideological positions of the subject or the society), it can be argued that at the level of the individual and public (social) consciousness the artistic worldview tends to

transform into the ethnic worldview, which appears to be a symbolic marker of the *us - them* distinction . The ethnic worldview is based on the primary archetypal value constructs expressing the symbolic “return to some state *before* the effect of the foreign” (Kardinskaya, 2005). Thus, the cultural-semiotic system of the values that are important for the ethnic group, which have the greatest potential for the construction of a positive image of an ethnic community, is created through artistic practices.

In order to explore the constructivist possibilities of artistic practices, the study turned to the methodological foundations of the cultural-semiotic approach, which is based on the idea of considering culture as a system of cultural texts that embody social values and meanings during the process of creating symbols and the artistic dialogue with the recipient. According to this approach, the artistic practices offer a way to imagine the ethnocultural group through an aesthetically seen text that is works of fine art. Since culture is a primary text, the study refers artistic practices in general and art in particular to secondary constructing systems, dealing with existing and functioning primary constructs embodying ethnocultural values. One example of the implementation of this mechanism is the practice of visualizing the deer as the leading character of works of the national art.

In carrying out the analysis of the possibilities of the construction of a positive ethnic identity in the current artistic practices, this paper focuses on the works of fine art by Khakass artists.

The analysis of graphic works of art and paintings made by Khakass artists throughout the development of the fine art in Khakassia, revealed the priority cultural-semiotic mechanisms of the construction of an ethnic identity of Khakasses. These are the creation of the national art school with a constellation of artists from the Khakass ethnocultural group; the formation of the history of the development of the Khakass fine art with a specific periodization; the development of the national art in the context of the current artistic practices; entering the mainstream of the development of contemporary art. In addition, the results of the analysis showed that the construction of a positive ethnic identity is really secondary in nature, associated

with the use of already existing cultural sign systems in the form of traditional ethnocultural values, materialized in the works of fine art. The symbolic creation of a positive image of the Khakass ethnocultural group uses the existing specific cultural constructs as a support, whose importance is related to the duration (persistence) of their presence in this ethnocultural group.

The cultural-semiotic form of Khakass graphic works and paintings embody such ethnocultural values as 1) a single ethnocultural Khakass ideological framework (including the religious and mythological one); 2) specific types of cultural heroes, typical of the Khakass ethnocultural group; 3) the ideas of the ideal type of Khakass personality; 4) particularly significant things; 5) unique cultural symbols for different types of social communications.

Thus, the main conclusion of the study is the comprehension of artistic practices in general and the works of the national fine art in particular as a symbolic space, in which ethnicity is not only represented to the public, but is also constructed by the individual again by means of the mechanisms of symbolization, dialogueness and communication. A feature of the works of the national fine art is that they mostly represent those cultural-semiotic forms that express the ethnic group's value system, its traditional concepts, i.e. all that forms the core of culture, ethnic constants, allowing the ethnic group to preserve the uniqueness of its culture in the modern, multicultural world. It is important to note that the issue of the construction of a positive ethnic identity by means of artistic practices is dialectical in nature. On the one hand, ethnocultural values, established in the historical dynamics of the ethnic group, are primordial in nature, i.e., they are initially a defined construct that regulates the life of the ethnic group. In other words, it is a primary construct. On the other hand, ethnocultural values, embodied in the works of art, take on a second life as a mental construct, consciously created by the individual (the artist, the viewer) and fixed by artistic practices. This is a secondary construct. Thus, the works of art carry out the secondary sociocultural construction of a positive ethnic identity, using primary constructs of ethnocultural values as their signs.

In recent years, sociological and cultural studies on ethnicity have increasingly focused on a social constructionist perspective. The issue of generating a sociocultural sense-making function by cultural practices became particularly relevant in the last decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> –early 21<sup>st</sup> century due to the phenomena of globalization and multiculturalism. This study is in a certain way consistent with such a perspective, given the contention that artistic practices possess the possibility of the constructing a positive ethnic identity. Naturally, in the present study, a more specific attention has been paid to the Khakass art school as one of the representative national artistic practices making mechanisms involved in the construction of a positive ethnic identity. With a focus on the visual materials (painting, graphic arts) by Khakass, the titular ethnic group of the Republic of Khakassia, this study enhances our empirical knowledge about the artistic practices of not merely the Khakass, but other Indigenous peoples of Siberia as well, such as the Dolgans, the Nenets, and the Yakuts. The researchers have paid little, to say the least, attention to the visual art of this communities. At the same time, this research provides a theoretical basis for understanding a positive ethnic identity and the strategies of its constructing by means of artistic practices. Thus, this study involves an empirical and theoretical study of the construction of a positive ethnic identity in the current artistic practices. However, a positive ethnic identity is not exclusively constructed by the ethnocultures values of indigenous ethnocultural groups. It can being achieved by the certain historical and cultural events, and depends on the desire of the individual to value and respect the national culture of other communities.

The approach discussed in this study emphasizes the key role of sign-symbolic forms of art works that carry a serious ideological load by participating in the construction of an ethnic identity. Thus, the cultural-semiotic approach helps us to analyze artworks as a symbolic space of the value representation of a nation, its traditions in an iconic and symbolic form, and, therefore, can be applied to construct a positive image of ethno-cultural groups. Therefore, the analytic potential of this perspective expands our ability to understand the construction of a positive ethnic identity not just within Khakass people's experiences in particular, but other ethnic

groups as well. This study draws upon and contributes to the anthropological, social and cultural study of an ethnic identity. It incorporates artistic practices into the construction of an ethnic identity, identifies processes and adds mechanisms to the study of the issues of ethnicity, and the significance of artistic practices.

### **Limitations of the Study and Recommendations for Future Research**

There are limitations to this study. While the visual art may be too small to generalize the findings to all indigenous peoples of Siberia in the constructing a positive ethnic identity, this research provides the theoretical and empirical base which describes the experiences of the Khakass ethnocultural group. The findings can be transferred to other artistic practices of indigenous peoples of Siberia.

Besides, the analysis of such artistic practices as decorative and applied arts, music, folklore, national literature of indigenous peoples of Siberia could have enriched the study; however, they are left out of the primary data to keep the data source consistent and more or less homogenous.

Based upon the above findings, it would be useful to carry out a survey among the representatives of indigenous peoples of Siberia, in particular among the Khakass. What is a positive ethnic identity for them? Which visual image is more positive and why? How do cultural practices revive, transform, or destroy an ethnic identity? A future research also might address whether or to what degree artistic practices reinforce a positive ethnic identity. Finally, a future research could be conducted to ascertain how indigenous peoples' position as an ethnic minority in the host society influence their inter-ethnic interaction which in turn affect the construction of a positive ethnic identity.

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