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SOCIOCULTURAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE COSSACKS

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Abstract

Cossacks are a unique ethnic and sociocultural phenomenon in history. Cossacks were not only a social condition with a special way of life and an original military formation but a unique model of social development with an original sociopolitical structure, a peculiar way of life, traditions, ethical and legal norms and institutions, culture and folklore. Based on an expert survey, the fundamental sociocultural characteristics of the Cossacks have been determined, to which the sovereignty of the Russian Cossacks, their mission, consisting of a buffer (border) role and the protection of the fatherland, freedom and Cossack democracy as imperatives of life, as well as the specifics of mentality and ethnopsychological characteristics of the Cossacks have been attributed.

Keywords

Cossacks – Sociocultural characteristics – Sovereignty – Cossack democracy – Mentality

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Introduction

Researchers convincingly proved that as a separate social stratum with its own specific way of life, the Cossacks began to form from the 16th century and acquired their final forms at the turn of the 16th-17th centuries¹. However, many authors have repeatedly noted that cultural values close to the Cossack ones were found in a much wider range. Among them, some were known in previous eras. As a result, two rather distinct trends emerged in the assessments of the sociocultural phenomenon of the Cossacks: spatial parallels are considered to be a proof of the negation of the autochthonous nature of the Cossacks², while the temporary ones serve as arguments for pushing its origins back centuries³.

In the context of this problem, attention should be paid to the way of life of the Cossack community and the fact that such groups were a very characteristic phenomenon for medieval Europe. This fact leads to the development of similar ways of adapting to the conditions of existence and activity in similar social (class) groups within wide spatial limits⁴. The military specifics of the activity, respectively, led to the deformation of the main worldviews in the direction that is necessary for the normal functioning of such a social community. That is why some features inherent in the Cossacks can rightly be called interethnic⁵. As for the problem of the sociocultural origins of the Cossacks from an older period, according to researchers, it was based on a certain ethnocultural basis. Despite the change in the external conditions of the functioning of the cultural community, certain sociocultural characteristics undergo significant changes, new ways of cultural adaptation of the group are developed. They do not come from scratch, but are layered on the already existing system of worldviews and, with responsibility, in a certain way are subjected to transformation⁶. The purpose of the study is to determine the fundamental sociocultural characteristics of the Cossacks based on an expert survey. The hypothesis of the study: the fundamental sociocultural characteristics of the Cossacks are sovereignty, the protection of the fatherland, freedom, Cossack democracy, the specificity of mentality and ethnopsychological characteristics.

According to the results of the study, we can conclude that the goal set in the study was achieved.

¹ IU. N. Kruglov, *Mnogolikii mir kazachestva* (Rostov-on-Don: BARO-PRESS, 2007); A. I. Kozlov, *Otkuda poshli i kto takie kazaki* (periodizatsiia kazachei istorii), Volgograd: Problemy istorii kazachestva: sb. nauch. tr. (1995): 163-182 y A. P. Skorik, *Vozniknoveniie donskogo kazachestva kak etnosa. Iznachaknye kulturnye traditsii: ucheb. posobie* (Novocherkassk: NPI, 1992).

² V. Nikitin *Kazachestvo, Natsiia ili sosloviie?* (Moscow, Yauza, 2007) y V. V. Glushchenko, *Kazaki Otechestva bylogo i nyneshnego* (Moscow, Academy of Military Sciences, 1997).

³ A. A. Gordeev, *Istoriia kazachestva* (Moscow: VECHE, 2014) y V. E. Shambarov. *Kazachestvo. Istoriia volnoi Rusi* (Moscow: Eksmo, 2007).

⁴ A. Kuraev; S. Artemyeva; R. Azmetova; S. Dmitrieva y V. Pallotta, "The Don Cossacks and Orthodoxy: Religious and Moral Traditions in the Framework of Modern Education", *European Journal of Science and Theology* Vol: 15 num 4 (2019): 127-136.

⁵ A. M. Gnedenko y V. M. Gnedenko, *Rytsari pravoslaviia: pravda o kazachestve* (Moscow: Magistral, 2014).

⁶ N. E. Shafazhinskaia, *Dukhovno-nravstvennye osnovy i potetsial rossiiskogo kazachestva: Vera, kultura, patrioticheskoe sluzhnie: Monografiia* (Moscow: INFRA-M, 2014) y L. G. Ovanesyan; L. A. Klykova; E. B. Yunusova y A. G. Churashov, "School Museum as A Center of The Educational Environment in The Cadet Cossack Corps", *Opción* Vol: 35 num 19 (2019): 2337-2365.

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Methods

In the research process, the following methods were applied:

- analysis of scientific literature on the problem of the formation of the Cossacks as a sub-ethnic group and social institution;
- an expert survey to determine the fundamental sociocultural characteristics of the Cossacks.

An expert online survey was attended by 50 experts, employees of the Kuban Cossack Academy, members of Cossack public organizations.

Results and discussion

Based on the expert survey, the fundamental sociocultural characteristics of the Cossacks were determined (Table 1).

Nº	Sociocultural characteristics of the Cossacks	%*	Rank
1	Sovereignty and a buffer (border) role and the protection of the fatherland as the mission of the Cossacks	95%	1
2	Cossack democracy and freedom as imperatives of life	85%	2-3
3	Specifics of mentality and ethnopsychological characteristics	85%	2-3
4	Religiosity	80%	4

Note: compiled based on the expert survey; * – percentage of expert references

Table 1

Fundamental sociocultural characteristics of the Cossacks

According to the majority of experts (95%), the main sociocultural characteristic of the Cossacks is sovereignty, which consists in fidelity to military duty and serving the state and the fatherland. Devotion and decent service are the first duty and foundation of the Cossacks, their customs and foundations of life. All of the above, according to experts, is formed by an integrated system of Cossack education.

Speaking about the border role and the protection of the fatherland as a mission of the Cossacks, experts who took part in the survey noted that the border guard throughout history has been one of the most important functions of the life of the Cossacks. The Russian Cossacks were formed as a social condition on the borders of Russia. Settling there, engaging in crafts or obtaining land, the Cossacks, having no state protection, were forced to defend themselves against warlike neighbors. To keep their families and property safe, border settlers had to take up arms and create special defense bodies. Quickly realizing the military capabilities of the Cossacks, the rulers began to use them in the border service from the beginning of the 16th century⁷.

The first mention of the state border service in the Moscow state dates from 1512. It

⁷ L. N. Polushina; N. N. Kleshchina; I. A. Sinitsyna; N. I. Merzlikina y N. M. Shlenskaya, "The role of higher education in saving societies in challenging circumstances", *Espacios* Vol: 39 num 49 (2018) y N. E. Shafazhinskaya; G. N. Yulina; I. K. Orlova; L. F. Kolokatova y V. V. Sklyadneva, "To the

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LIC. EKATERINA NIKOLAEVNA ABELDINOVA

was then that Prince Vasili III “established his land with outposts”. These were *storozhi* or *prityony* (permanent *zalogi*) that were sent to the steppe and blocked roads, as well as *stanitsa* (horse patrol), which performed tasks of an observation, reconnaissance and combat nature⁸.

According to I. L. Konevichenko, a centralized *storozhi* service began to be created only in the 1520s, after the tragic events of 1521 when the Crimean Khan Mehmed Giray organized a major attack on the Moscow state. The *storozhi* service was not able to warn of this campaign then, and, therefore, the Crimeans inflicted great damage, capturing thousands of people. Then, to prevent sudden attacks, *storozhi* and *stanitsas* were organized throughout the steppe line. They covered the two most dangerous directions – Ryazan and Seversk⁹. Since the 1520s, Cossack *stanitsas* conducted deep intelligence to Azov. On the Ryazan direction stood *zalogi*. Seversk land was guarded by *sevruki* (local residents) and Cossacks. Their patrols sought Tatar *sakmy* (ways (routes) of the movement of the Tatar troops) along the way and reported them to the border governors. They also served in Donetsk *storozhi* as watchmen for hire, accompanied as *vozhi* (guides) of the Moscow *voivodes* (military commanders)¹⁰.

The leadership of the Moscow state willingly attracted the Cossacks to the border service, because its own resources were not enough. As a result, at the end of the 16th century, Moscow border outposts consisted mainly of Cossacks. According to the claims of the English merchant D. Fletcher, almost 4,000 of the 4,300 mercenary infantry soldiers on the southern borders of Moscow were Cossacks¹¹.

In the 17th century, the Moscow state was already massively using the Cossacks for the protection and defense of the southern borders as the most adapted and experienced professional military. The fact is that the guards, who were recruited from the “children of the boyars”, not wanting to serve in the unprivileged troops, deserted and refused to serve. They were fired and transferred to the city service, and in their place service people were appointed, primarily Cossacks. According to the authorities, the organization on the border of the Cossack garrisons was also to drastically reduce costs, because the Cossacks received small estates and served, according to the Boyar decree on the *stanitsa* and *storozhi* service of February 16, 1571, “from the land without money”¹².

Therefore, the Cossacks throughout their history constantly performed the tasks of border protection. This function was inherent in various Cossack states. For the Cossacks, who lived in the borderlands, its protection was caused by the natural need for self-defense. Special border structures were created from the Cossacks, which served as an outpost for

question of content and interpretation of divinity in the christian spiritual tradition”, European Journal of Science and Theology Vol: 14 num 14 (2018): 143-152.

⁸ N. F. Bugai, “Kazachestvo Rossii: mir na granitse, spokoistvie v gosudarstve, sluzhba Otechestvu... “Belye piatna” rossiiskoi i mirovoi istorii”, num 3 (2015): 21-46.

⁹ I. L. Konevichenko, *Kazachestvo v pravovom prostranstve Rossii: istoriia i sovremennost: monografiia* (Saint-Petersburg: GUAP, 2016).

¹⁰ B. Bouk, *Frontir ili pograniche? Rol zbykikh granits v istorii donsokogo kazachestva. Sotsialnaia organizatsiia i obychnoe pravo* (Krasnodar, 2001).

¹¹ M. P. Astapenko, *Donskii kazaki, 1550-1920: ucheb. posobie* (Rostov-on-Don: Logos, 1992).

¹² L. G. Ovanesyan; L. A. Klykova; E. B. Yunusova; A. G. Churashov; A. M. Plekhanov y A. A. Plekhanov, “Kazaki v okhrane i zashite granitsy Moskovskogo gosudarstva (XIV-nachalo XVI veka)”, *Pogranichnik* num 8 (2001): 59-65.

the protection and defense of the Russian Empire. Regarding the forms and means of border protection, they were constantly improving, special structures were created, which made the Cossack border guard more mobile and combat-ready and made it possible to more effectively solve the tasks of strengthening the country's security, protecting and guarding the border.

Speaking about Cossack democracy as an imperative of life, the majority of experts (75%) noted that the formation of the Cossacks was the beginning of new social relations that were fundamentally different from existing ones. Along with the formation of the Cossacks, the democratic nature of the Cossack system was born. The basis of this democracy was the possibility of delegating authority (for example, in organizing a military campaign) and reciprocal responsibility, rather than a tendency towards democracy for the whole people.

Experts emphasized that there was no democracy on the territory of Russia back then, and the ideas themselves had not yet received any distribution. Self-governing democratic foundations at the end of the 15th century were partially characteristic of the rural population, where community self-government was preserved. However, the Cossacks in their social basis were not rural. Although some researchers consider the peasantry to be the social basis of the Cossacks, the principle of democracy was derived from this¹³. However, the peasantry, according to one of the experts interviewed, "isn't bellicose in its mentality; therefore, participation in the Cossacks for the peasant is a departure from tradition, a break with their mentality. In this case, they cease to be a peasant".

One expert noted that, delving into the etymology of the concept of "Cossack" and trying to establish a direct dependence on this Cossacks as a phenomenon, researchers make a methodological mistake. Indeed, for the participants of that primary Cossack creation, the essence was important, not the value (the essence, which was superimposed on local conditions, which determined the appearance of the corresponding features). This happened the same way as in modern times. Today's farmer does not know the etymology and meaning of the word "farmer", but understands its essence in relation to himself. The term "Cossack" in relation to a special group of the population entered quite quickly into circulation at all levels of society and government. That is why in official documents we meet it only from the end of the 15th to the beginning of the 16th century (the word "farmer" in Russian society of the 1990s was interpreted approximately similarly in time: someone else's origin, it was perceived in accordance with the content of the activity, but with its own characteristics; in this case, its legislative consolidation also contributed to the quick adaptation of the term).

According to the majority of experts surveyed (80%), the democracy of the Cossacks has a natural (initial, primary) origin. Of course, the Cossacks knew self-government as an institution of law. However, let us not forget that the self-government was not comprehensive back then, because only a part of the population could take part in it.

The creation of the Cossacks was based on spontaneous behavior and the need to coordinate positions in the absence of a regulatory beginning. In conditions when two

¹³ E. A. Chemyakin, *Istoricheskie traditsii kazachego samoupravleniia v Rossii: politicheskii aspect* (Volgograd: Publisher, 2001) y E. I. Dulimov, I. I. Zolotarev, *Samoupravleniie kazakov: istoriia i sovremennost* (Rostov-on-Don: DIUI, 1998) y

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independent entities collide, which have a common goal, there is a need to clarify the basis of interaction on the principle of “you – to me, I – to you”. That is, legal relations arise where the subject of the agreement and the conditions for its implementation and liability for their violation are determined.

As an example, one of the experts cited the following circumstance:

- The subject of the agreement is a military campaign.
- Parties to the agreement – relevant entities – individuals.
- The terms of the transaction – the mandatory receipt of dividends, moral satisfaction and the like.
- Responsibility for violation of the agreement – loss of authority, change of leader and the like. Perhaps material or criminal liability. First of all – moral (subpolitical).

It was the equal rights of the parties, according to 70% of experts, that created democratic relations among the Cossacks. The equality of the parties is indicated by the very first documents where the leaders of the campaigns and their participants are indicated: on the one hand, the ataman (leader), on the other, Cossack hikers. There is no indication of a vassal, landowner, administrative, slave, etc. dependence.

Democracy is an institution both legal and social. As legal, it defines the rules of behavior, and as social, social relations. From the further discussions of experts on this issue, it follows that the agreements entered into were of a conventional contractual nature and they were not written, but verbal. They were multilateral (and not bilateral) in terms of the number of participants and had a civil law character.

Any transaction can be political, international, civil, entrepreneurial, etc. Since the agreement between the participants (Cossacks) was not based on goals of a political or international nature (this requires the presence of relevant entities), they were civilian (possibly even civilian-entrepreneurial) and pursued specific property and nonproperty (moral) interests. These agreements were not public.

Any transaction is based on the equal rights of the parties. If the agreement is under pressure, it cannot be considered valid. Such a deal cannot be repeated. In the case of the Cossacks, we see a different picture – the constant repetition and renegotiation of agreements.

Perhaps that is why, according to experts, we see a large number of leaders in the early Cossacks, whose change occurred due to the renegotiation of transactions with them by the Cossacks. Later, this took the form of an ataman election procedure. As for the Cossack leadership, its personal authority among the Cossacks was based on personal and real merits. Thus, the democratic equality of the Cossacks has an initial character. It is realized in conditions when an equal meets with an equal in stateless territory. Therefore, the Cossack democracy is based on three main elements: 1) a virtually stateless space that is not controlled by any state body or is poorly controlled, 2) the need of individuals to unite for the corresponding purpose, 3) the application of the principle of equality, which has its own natural character.

Experts noted that in the Cossack society, each individual is distinguished by a special feature – the ability to be responsible for their destiny (due to the specifics of life). Moreover, according to experts, the spirit of freedom, moral and physical, that reigned on the lands of the Cossacks, was due not only to the peculiarities of the self-organization of the Cossacks, but also to something purely Russian: sincerity, the scope of the Cossack soul – that is, a kind of mentality.

Speaking about the peculiarities of the Cossack mentality, experts noted that the Cossack community was formed on a completely Russian traditional cultural basis, under the generating influence of Russian ethnicity in all its aspects (personal, tribal, regional), forming its special variant – Cossack. Cossack mentality as its basis represents the characterological type of thinking and sensuality, which expresses the Cossack's attitudes, stable ideas about the world, peculiar emotional advantages and inclinations, aesthetic preferences, sacred foundations inherent in the Cossack cultural tradition. The mentality of the Cossacks intersects cultural, historical and natural conditioning, rational, as well as sensual and emotional principles, creating unique integrity of the Cossack spiritual and mental life.

Especially indicative in this regard is the interpretation of the phenomena of social and spiritual culture, in particular, the norms and stereotypes of Cossack behavior, the uniqueness of spiritual values, which together formed the psychology of warlike masculinity.

In this case, the cornerstone of the worldview of the Cossacks, and, therefore, their real behavior, was the conviction that the occupation worthy of a real person is only the Cossacks. Experts deduced this feature from the “natural reluctance of a warrior to join farming”, while providing strong evidence that such a worldview norm was known to European peoples from the time of Ancient Greece. On Russian lands, according to one of the experts interviewed, this attitude may have one more reason. Namely, that agriculture was often associated with barshchina (corvee). Despising work in the field, the Cossacks thus protested against the subordinate position of the Russian land. Cossacks considered the work of the farmer less prestigious than a free life, which requires a fair amount of courage and endurance.

During this period, the idea of free life and individualism was gaining extra weight for the Cossacks. Expert evidence confirmed this feature of the Cossacks. Consequently, individualistic traits in the Cossack milieu find their actualization in active forms of manifestation and contribute to the establishment of an extraverted type of thinking. The peculiar nature of the life of the Cossack community (namely, its militarized character) entailed the peculiarities of updating the assessment units. After analyzing the cultural characteristics of this social group, experts concluded that those traits that were of primary importance for any military condition were considered positive, namely: courage, adventurism – that is, those that belong to an extrovert psychological type. To the negative ones, they attributed passivity – a trait characteristic of the introvert type of personality. It is in the phenomenon of mentality as a matrix of being and consciousness of the Cossack community that ethnopsychological features of the Cossacks are born. They evoke concepts that are defined as “Cossack dare” and the like. The worldview and value guidelines of Cossack spirituality, on the one hand, according to one of the respondents, kind of “systematize the culture, fill the gaps in it with universal schemes that were formed in such remote times”. On the other hand, in these so-called “universal schemes” re-reveal the archetypal forms of Russian mentality.

The well-known mental features of Russian ethnic culture, as A. A. Eromasova notes, is traditionalism, patriotism, cosmism, the primacy of spirituality over corporeality, love of freedom, optimism, etc.¹⁴.

In the spiritual culture of the Cossacks, the same patriotism manifests itself as personified love for the motherland, for one's native land and as a literal "attachment" to one's own land territory, that is, in the literal and figurative sense¹⁵. A. V. Iarovoi takes the principle of patriotism to the level of Russian ethnicity and treats it as love "for the House, the Temple, the Homeland". Turning to the historical manifestations of the archetype of Mother Earth, the worship of the female deities of the Slavic pantheon and the cult of women, the scientist also connects it with the image of the Blessed Virgin Mary, who, in the guise of the Intercession, becomes the patroness of the Cossacks¹⁶. This position confirms the connection of the Cossack ethnocultural mentality with the deep religiosity of the Cossacks. Moreover, in the spiritual culture of the Cossacks, these signs are not only leading, but also, harmoniously combined, form the basic foundation of the mentality of the Cossacks – its religious core.

It is not surprising that religiosity as another important characteristic of the Cossacks was noted by 80% of experts. Cossacks were pious and deeply religious people. Despite all the patriarchal simplicity in nature and customs, they sincerely and deeply believed in the almighty God and were cordially devoted to the holy faith of Christ and the Orthodox Church. These high and holy feelings were the basis of their whole life and work.

Comprehensive religiosity, in general, was the most significant common feature of the Russian people, laid down already on a mental level. Therefore, the main themes of art were Christological motives, and Christ-centeredness, in particular in literature, was one of its main ideological foundations¹⁷. Only as a way to God, and as God's creation, is nature conceived, which does not appear to be an independent object of knowledge. Also in the context of understanding the universal relationship with God, the person's personality is also considered, and the norms of Christian ethics and morality are recognized as the main guidelines for their actions.

Experts deduced it as an imperative of the attitude of the Cossacks to their own lives as a means of serving and protecting the Orthodox faith. Its logical continuation was the cultivation by the Cossacks of the perception of death as inevitable – not fatal, but conscious. In the context of this, it seems understandable why the Cossacks considered war (always with the people of different religion "busurmany") a holy thing. Thus, the religiosity traditional for the Slavic, and later Russian culture, is preserved in the mental instructions of the Cossack public life, somewhat modified and acquired a more aggressive character.

Thus, the Cossack mentality arose based on the Russian ethnocultural mentality with a tangible influence of the religious and aesthetic context and the leading principles of the

¹⁴ A. A. Eromasova, *Mentalnost russkogo cheloveka kak fenomen natsionalnoi kultury (filosofsko-antropologicheskii analiz)* St. Petersburg, 2017).

¹⁵ P. Lukichev y A. Skorik, "Sotsialno-psikhologicheskii fenomen kazachestva", *Svobodnaia mysl* num 8 (1995): 42-51.

¹⁶ A. V. Iarovoi, *Voinskaia kultura kazachestva: simvolicheskoe prostranstvo i ritual* (Rostov-on-Don: Publishing House NMTS Logos. 2011).

¹⁷ A. V. Sopov, "Religioznost kazachestva: mify, fakty, problem", *Problemy izucheniia i razvitiia kazachei kultury* num 2 (2000).

Cossack fraternity. The Cossacks managed to assimilate and, at the same time, synthesize the traditions of Russian ethnicity, translating their semantic and functional integrity and vitality into their own spiritual experience. Having restored the cultural and historical formations and archetypes of ethnoculture based on the ethnic foundations of the Cossack being, the Cossacks received their own special type of mentality, which was revealed in all areas of the spiritual culture of the Cossacks, in particular in the worldview, moral, religious and the like. Having designated the main mental features of the Cossack state, we concluded that they were mainly ways of reacting to external conditions of existence, that is, a peculiar way of adapting to them¹⁸.

At the same time, as one of the experts noted, the Cossack mentality had an extremely large influence on the processes of formation of the people's worldview. Just as at the time of the emergence of the Cossacks, the traditional mental foundations of the Russian people had a great influence on them. Later, at the stage of the Cossacks as a social stratum, the traditional Russian worldview was largely modified under the influence of the mental foundations of the Cossacks.

Conclusion

The following conclusions can be drawn.

Throughout their history, the Cossacks have constantly carried out tasks to protect borders. For the Cossacks, who lived in the borderlands, its protection was caused by the natural need for self-defense. Special border structures were created from the Cossacks, which served as an outpost for the protection and defense of the Russian Empire.

The democratic equality of the Cossacks has an initial character. Cossack democracy is based on three main elements: 1) a virtually stateless space that is not controlled by any state body or poorly controlled, 2) the need of individuals to unite for the corresponding purpose, 3) the application of the principle of equality, which has natural character.

Moreover, the personal freedom of the Cossacks, moral and physical, was determined not only by the peculiarities of the self-organization of the Cossacks, but also by the peculiar mentality that arose based on the Russian ethnocultural mentality with a tangible

¹⁸ V. P. Bikbulatova y R. S. Rabadanova, Idei M.A. Sholokhova V Realizatsii Protsessa Razvitiia Kulturno-Produktivnoi Lichnosti. V sbornike: M. A. Sholokhov v sovremennom mire Sbornik materialov Mezhdunarodnoi nauchno-prakticheskoi konferentsii "M. A. Sholokhov v sovremennom mire (k dnu rozhdeniia pisatel'ia)". FGBOU VO Moskovskii Gosudarstvennyi universitet tekhnologii i upravleniia imeni K. G. Razumovskogo, Rossiiskaia gosudarstvennaia biblioteka. Moscow: Federal State Budget Educational Institution of Higher Education K.G. Razumovsky Moscow State University of technologies and management (the First Cossack University, 2019), 255-261; N. E. Shafazhinskaia; G. N. Iulina; R. S. Rabadanova y V. P. Bikbulatova, Glavnye Napravleniia Dukhovnogo Razvitiia, Gosudarstvennogo Sluzheniia I Obrazovaniia Sovremennogo Kazachestva. V sbornike: Tserkov i kazachestvo: sorabotnichestvo na blago Otechestva materialy Vosmoi Mezhdunarodnoi nauchno-prakticheskoi konferentsii (2019): 161-169 y N. S. Vinogradova; I. K. Orlova; I. V. Polozhentseva; R. S. Rabadanova; E. N. Sepiashvili; N. E. Shafazhinskaia y G. N. Yulina, Metodicheskie Rekomendatsii Dlia Vozhatykh Detsko-lunosheskikh Obshchestvennykh Obedinenii, Kazachikh Kadetskikh Korpusov I Kazachikh Kadetskikh Klassov (Moscow: Materialy k studencheskomu forumu "Vozhatyi XXI veka" (15.09 - 15.10.2017), 2018.

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influence of the religious and aesthetic context and the leading principles of the Cossack fraternity. The Cossacks managed to assimilate and, at the same time, synthesize the traditions of Russian ethnicity, translating their semantic and functional integrity and vitality into their own spiritual experience. Having restored the cultural and historical formations and archetypes of ethnoculture based on the ethnic foundations of the Cossack being, the Cossacks received their own special type of mentality, which was revealed in all areas of the spiritual culture of the Cossacks, in particular in the worldview, moral, religious and the like.

The results of the study confirmed the hypothesis that the fundamental sociocultural characteristics of the Cossacks are sovereignty, the protection of the fatherland, personal freedom, Cossack democracy and the specifics of mentality and ethnopsychological characteristics.

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