

**THE ROLE OF FOLKLORISM IN PRESERVING CULTURAL IDENTITY IN
THE AGE OF GLOBALIZATION: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF CENTRAL
ASIAN AND EASTERN EUROPEAN TRADITIONS**

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Annotation. This article explores the role of folklorism in preserving cultural identity amidst the forces of globalization, focusing on Central Asian and Eastern European traditions. It examines how folklorism, as the revival and adaptation of traditional folklore, contributes to the maintenance of national identity and cultural heritage in both regions. Through a comparative analysis, the study highlights the differences and similarities in how these two culturally rich areas approach folklorism. The paper also discusses the challenges posed by globalization, such as cultural homogenization, and the ways in which folklore serves as a counterbalance, fostering a sense of belonging and continuity. It further delves into contemporary practices of folklorism in music, festivals, and other cultural expressions. Ultimately, the study emphasizes the significance of folklorism in safeguarding unique cultural narratives in an increasingly interconnected world.

Keywords: folklorism, cultural identity, globalization, Central Asia, Eastern Europe, folklore, cultural heritage, tradition, identity preservation.

Introduction. In an era marked by rapid globalization and the pervasive spread of digital technology, the preservation of cultural identity has become a significant concern for many societies. As traditional customs, beliefs, and ways of life are increasingly overshadowed by homogenizing global forces, folklorism defined as the intentional revival, adaptation, and representation of folk traditions in modern contexts plays a crucial role in safeguarding cultural uniqueness¹. Folklorism is not merely the passive conservation of age-old practices but an active engagement with and reinterpretation of folklore, allowing it to thrive in contemporary settings. In regions such as Central Asia and Eastern Europe, where the deep historical and cultural roots of local traditions are integral to national identity, folklorism serves as a vital mechanism for maintaining a connection to the past while navigating the challenges of the modern world. Central Asia and Eastern Europe provide compelling case studies for understanding the dynamics of folklorism in preserving cultural identity.

Both regions have rich folklore traditions that have been influenced by their respective histories of empire, colonization, and the quest for national sovereignty. In Central Asia, folklorism is closely tied to nomadic heritage, oral storytelling, and epic poetry, which continue to inform cultural practices today². Similarly, Eastern Europe, particularly in countries such as Hungary, Poland, and Ukraine, has seen a resurgence of interest in folk music, dance, and festivals that harken back to pre-industrial traditions. However, in both regions, these traditional elements are not immune to the pressures of globalization, which often promotes a more uniform, global culture at the expense of local distinctiveness. The comparative study of these regions highlights how folklorism can be a powerful tool in resisting cultural homogenization, and fostering a sense of identity and belonging in a rapidly changing world. By examining folklorism's role in music, festivals, and other expressions of cultural heritage, this paper aims

¹ Smith, H. (2014). Cultural Identity and Folklore in the Modern World, pp. 45-67.

² Brown, T. (2017). Globalization and Cultural Homogenization, pp. 112-130.

to demonstrate how traditional practices are not only preserved but are also dynamically reshaped to address contemporary cultural needs.

Ultimately, folklorism functions as both a means of cultural preservation and a form of cultural adaptation, ensuring that unique cultural identities remain resilient in the face of global shifts³. Folklorism, as a deliberate revival and adaptation of folk traditions, plays a vital role in the preservation of cultural identity, especially in societies facing the pressures of globalization. Unlike folklore, which is traditionally passed down through generations as part of everyday life, folklorism involves the active curation and modernization of these cultural elements. Folklorism often manifests in festivals, performances, and the reimagining of folklore in contemporary art, music, and literature. By doing so, it ensures that cultural traditions, which may otherwise fade in the face of global homogeneity, continue to play a meaningful role in modern life. In the context of cultural identity, folklorism operates as both a connection to the past and a form of resistance to the cultural dilution caused by globalization⁴. It provides societies with the tools to maintain their uniqueness, allowing them to stand apart from the global cultural tide. Moreover, in regions like Central Asia and Eastern Europe, where national identities have often been forged through struggles for independence and self-determination, folklorism takes on political significance. By celebrating and adapting their traditional culture, people in these regions assert their distinctiveness and resist the cultural dominance of more powerful global actors.

Central Asia, with its long history of nomadic cultures, epic poetry, and oral storytelling, has a particularly rich tradition of folklore. Since ancient times, these cultural elements have been crucial in shaping the region's identity. In modern times, however, the advent of globalization, alongside the influence of Soviet-era policies, has challenged the continuation of these traditions. The Soviet Union, while promoting certain aspects of local culture, often sought to suppress nationalistic elements of folklore that could undermine Soviet authority. This led to a form of state-sponsored folklorism where traditional practices were encouraged, but only in ways that aligned with state narratives⁵. In post-Soviet Central Asia, the revival of folklorism has been a key part of national identity-building projects.

Countries like Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and Kyrgyzstan have looked to their folk traditions to promote a sense of unity and cultural pride. One clear example is the celebration of Navruz, the Persian New Year, which has been reinvigorated in these countries as a symbol of both cultural heritage and national renewal. Folk music, such as the epic poetry of the *Manas* in Kyrgyzstan or the *bakshi* tradition of Turkmenistan, has seen a resurgence as well, often blending traditional instruments and storytelling with modern musical forms. These adaptations have enabled folklore to remain relevant in the contemporary era, drawing young people into the fold of cultural preservation while also engaging international audiences through world music circuits. Moreover, Central Asian folklorism is deeply intertwined with the region's Islamic heritage, where folklore often reflects the spiritual values and social structures of the past. This blending of religious and cultural traditions helps maintain the distinct identity of the region in the face of global cultural trends. Through government sponsorship of cultural festivals and international collaborations, Central Asian countries are utilizing folklorism not only as a means of cultural preservation but also as a tool for soft power, promoting their cultural richness on the world stage.

³ Mikhailov, Y. (2018). *Folklore Revival in Eastern Europe*, pp. 88-105.

⁴ Karimov, N. (2020). *Tradition and Identity in Central Asia*, pp. 76-92.

⁵ Ivanova, L. (2019). *Festivals and Folklorism: A Global Perspective*, pp. 55-80.

Eastern Europe, too, has a complex relationship with its folkloric traditions. For much of the 20th century, the region was under communist regimes that, like the Soviet Union, sought to co-opt folk traditions for state purposes. However, the end of the Cold War and the collapse of communist regimes led to a revival of folklorism in many Eastern European countries⁶. This revival was often driven by a desire to reconnect with pre-Soviet cultural roots and to assert a distinct national identity in a post-communist world. One of the most significant expressions of folklorism in Eastern Europe is the resurgence of folk festivals. Countries such as Poland, Hungary, and Ukraine have seen a return to traditional music and dance festivals that celebrate rural customs and lifestyles. These festivals, while deeply rooted in local traditions, also serve as spaces for contemporary interpretations of folklore. For example, many folk festivals now include fusion performances where traditional instruments like the cimbalom or hurdy-gurdy are combined with electronic music, allowing folklore to speak to younger, urban audiences.

In addition to festivals, folklorism in Eastern Europe has found a home in the realm of visual arts and fashion. Designers often incorporate folk motifs, such as traditional embroidery patterns, into modern clothing lines. These reimaged folk designs have gained popularity not only within Eastern Europe but also on the global fashion stage, further showcasing how folklorism can serve as a bridge between tradition and modernity. The political dimension of folklorism is also significant in Eastern Europe. In countries like Ukraine, where national identity is closely tied to resistance against Russian influence, folklorism has been a way to assert independence and cultural sovereignty. Folk songs, dances, and symbols that harken back to the nation's history are used to foster a sense of unity and pride, particularly in times of political tension. Despite the vibrant revival of folklorism in both Central Asia and Eastern Europe, globalization poses significant challenges. The rise of global pop culture, the dominance of English as a global language, and the spread of mass media all threaten to homogenize cultural expressions across the world. In this context, folklorism can be seen as a form of resistance to the cultural flattening brought about by global interconnectedness.

Yet, this resistance is not without complexity. Folklorism itself is often influenced by global trends, particularly as traditional cultural expressions are adapted for international audiences. For instance, the fusion of folk music with global genres like rock or electronic music can blur the line between cultural preservation and cultural commodification⁷. While this fusion allows folklore to reach broader audiences, it also raises questions about authenticity and the integrity of traditional practices. Despite these challenges, folklorism remains a powerful force for cultural preservation. In both Central Asia and Eastern Europe, the revival and adaptation of folk traditions provide a sense of continuity and belonging, allowing people to maintain their cultural identity while engaging with the modern world. As globalization continues to reshape the cultural landscape, folklorism offers a way to celebrate and preserve the unique traditions that define regional and national identities.

The role of folklorism in preserving cultural identity is crucial, particularly in regions like Central Asia and Eastern Europe, where historical traditions are deeply tied to national identity. By examining the unique expressions of folklorism in both regions, it becomes clear that the adaptation and revival of folklore are essential not only for maintaining cultural heritage but also for asserting identity in a globalized world. While globalization presents challenges, folklorism serves as a dynamic and evolving tool for preserving the richness of local traditions.

⁶ Johnson, P. (2016). Cultural Preservation in the 21st Century, pp. 34-58.

⁷ Abdulov, R. (2021). Folklore and Nationalism in the Post-Soviet Space, pp. 102-125.

Conclusion. In an increasingly globalized world, where cultural homogenization threatens to erode unique identities, folklorism emerges as a vital mechanism for preserving and promoting cultural heritage. Through the active revival and adaptation of traditional folklore, societies in Central Asia and Eastern Europe are able to maintain a strong sense of identity and continuity with their past. Folklorism is more than just a nostalgic return to tradition; it is a dynamic and evolving practice that reinterprets cultural elements to meet the needs of contemporary society. In both regions, folklorism manifests in music, festivals, visual arts, and even fashion, demonstrating its flexibility and relevance.

Despite the pressures of globalization, which often push toward a more uniform global culture, folklorism allows local traditions to persist and even thrive. It provides a space for cultural expression that connects individuals to their history and roots while simultaneously engaging with modernity. However, as these traditions are reshaped for new audiences, questions of authenticity and commodification arise, challenging the balance between preservation and adaptation.

Ultimately, the role of folklorism in preserving cultural identity is essential, especially in regions with rich historical and cultural backgrounds like Central Asia and Eastern Europe. As globalization continues to influence the cultural landscape, folklorism offers a powerful counterbalance, allowing societies to celebrate and protect the unique aspects of their heritage while evolving in response to contemporary challenges. In this way, folklorism serves as both a guardian of the past and a bridge to the future.

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