

ABSTRACT

of the dissertation submitted by Shinar Kanafyeva for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in the specialty «8D02209 – Oriental Studies» on the topic “Traditional Culture and Religious Identity of Ethnic Groups in Modern Pakistan”

General Description of the Research Paper.

This research paper examines the historical formation and contemporary transformation of the traditional culture and religious identity of the Pashtuns and Baloch in their society, analyzing the interaction of formal and informal institutions in contemporary Pakistan. The article examines the role of tribalism in the historical and cultural space of South Asia, the place of ethnic minorities in the formation of Pakistani national statehood, and the legal and normative mechanisms of the state and formal institutions in relation to these ethnic groups. This study focuses on informal institutions, particularly the Pashtun customary law system (Pashtunwali) and the Jirga-Jarga system of councils, as well as traditional Baloch norms (Balohmayar Balukh Mekar) and their functions in shaping social regulation and national identity. The study focuses on the characteristics of religious and ethnic harmony, the structural features of elements of "folk Islam," and religious practices. The roots of national identity in the processes of ethnocultural transformation in the context of globalization, state control over traditional tribal institutions, and the adaptation of traditional institutions to modern trends form the core research framework of this study.

The development of ethnic groups in modern Pakistan occurs within the framework of a federal state whose official religion is Islam (Constitution of Pakistan, 2023). The research questions of this dissertation are examined based on the traditional informal institutions of the Pashtuns and Baloch in contemporary Pakistan, particularly institutions associated with ethnic and ethnoreligious traditions.

Relevance of the research topic.

Currently, the study of ethnic processes in Pakistan, the formation and transformation of the region's traditional culture and religious identity, is of particular scientific, theoretical, and applied significance for Kazakhstani orientalists. This is determined, above all, by the depth of historical and civilizational interconnections on the Eurasian continent, the cultural and spiritual continuity between Central and South Asia, and the strengthening of humanitarian integration in the system of modern international relations.

The traditional culture and religious identity of ethnic groups such as the Pashtuns and Baloch in Pakistan represent an interdisciplinary social system formed through complex historical evolution. Within this system, the aforementioned informal institutions of the Pashtuns and Baloch serve as an important mechanism of social regulation. Such institutions coexist with the state and the legal system, and in some cases complement them, while sometimes representing alternative forms of social regulation.

The study of these phenomena is important on several levels. This study provides insight into the transformation of traditional societies in South Asia, and in particular, analyzes the dynamics of possible changes in ethnic tribal identity in the context of postcolonial development, (post)globalization, digital revolution, and artificial intelligence. Furthermore, this research is important for Kazakhstan in terms of improving its practices in managing social stability and cultural diversity as a multi-ethnic state, allowing it to consider the experience of managing ethnic diversity in postcolonial states; the legal status of ethnic minorities in Pakistan; and the interaction of traditional informal institutions with state institutions to understand the mechanisms of social integration.

For Kazakhstan, studying the interaction of formal and informal traditional institutions based on tribal structure in a multi-ethnic society may be of particular interest. The structural organization of traditional institutions and customary law influenced the development of both countries at different stages of their development. Historically, this led to the development of traditional norms alongside Islamic norms, leading to the emergence of the term "folk Islam." This also influenced the preservation of tribal identity. Overall, studying this topic allows us to understand the cultural diversity of Islamic civilization and analyze the models of transformation of traditional societies in the context of modern development and globalization.

The level of scholarly development of the research topic.

The first chapter of this dissertation examines the "Historical Analysis" section, which systematically analyzes key scholarly works and conceptual approaches related to the research topic. In this context, the "Level of Research" section of the introduction selects English-language, Russian-language, and Russian-language scholarly historiography on the topic and presents their key theoretical principles through comparative analysis. This approach allows us to systematize the dissertation's scientific and methodological foundation and synthesize a general historiographic discourse on the topic.

The issues of ethnic processes, traditional culture, and religious identity in Pakistan represent a complex scholarly problem, examined at the intersection of modern Oriental studies, history, cultural studies, cultural anthropology, and social theories. The study of this problem has developed rapidly since the second half of the 20th century, shaping a scholarly discourse aimed at explaining ethnopolitical structures in postcolonial states. However, comprehensive studies that fully analyze the traditional institutions and religious-ethnic identity of the Pashtuns and Baloch, linking them to the system of state, legal, and informal institutions, remain lacking.

The Russian-language school of oriental studies has studied Pakistan using historical-systematic and political-economic methods. In the works of Yu. V. Gankovsky and L. R. Gordon-Polonskaya, the process of Pakistan's formation is explained as the interaction of Islamic and ethnic factors (Gankovsky, 1961). These authors view the ethnic structure as a result of the colonial legacy and the process of postcolonial state-building. V. N. Moskalenko and M. A. Sidorov, analyzing the socioeconomic structure of Pakistani society, identify factors of inequality in the relationships of ethnic groups with the state (Moskalenko, Sidorov, 1979). V. Ya.

Belokrenitsky specifically studies the Baloch issue, analyzing their demographic structure, geopolitical position, and processes of political isolation (Belokrenitsky, Moskalenko, 2008). In her works, she describes Baloch identity as a sociopolitical phenomenon that arose in the context of protracted historical conflicts with the central government. L.G. Erekesheva, on the other hand, views Central and South Asia as a civilizational space demonstrating the transnational interconnectedness of religious and cultural systems (Erekesheva, 2013). She notes that this approach allows for an explanation of ethnic identity within the framework of a national structure and at the civilizational level.

In Pakistani academic literature, ethnic and religious processes are often examined in the context of domestic sociopolitical dynamics. Hamid Haqqani, analyzing the symbiosis between "mosque and army" in Pakistan, demonstrates the institutional influence of religious institutions on the structure of the state (Haqqani, 2005). K.A. Muhammad studies social transformations and describes the logic of change in traditional society in the context of modernization (Qadir, 2006). Zahid Hussain, analyzing the problem of radicalization and political Islam, demonstrates the role of religious ideology in the formation of modern political identity (Hussain, 2016).

A significant portion of Pakistani research is devoted to issues of ethnic politics and security. In these works, the Pashtuns and Baloch people are often viewed as factors of state security or regional instability. However, their internal social structure, cultural characteristics, and informal institutions are rarely analyzed in depth. Of course, there is a methodological limitation here, as ethnic identity is often treated as a political category, while cultural and anthropological aspects are relegated to the background.

The Baloch issue remains a relatively understudied area in the scholarly literature. Although the works of V. Ya. Belokrenitsky partially fill this gap, the internal cultural structure, religious practice, and informal legal system of Baloch society have not been fully explored (Belokrenitsky 2015). This is particularly true with regard to traditional norms of Baloch mekar (balukhmayyar) and their socio-regulatory functions.

While studies of the Pashtuns are quite extensive, their transformation in the context of contemporary globalization has been insufficiently analyzed. The works of Akbar Ahmed and Karoe, while providing a historical and anthropological foundation, do not fully address the process of contemporary urbanization, migration, and integration into state institutions. However, while existing scholarly literature explores the relationship between ethnic identity, religious identity, and state institutions in Pakistan at various levels, a comprehensive study explaining the traditional culture, informal institutions, and transformation of Pashtuns and Baloch in relation to their religious and ethnic identities within a unified empirical-theoretical framework is lacking. This dissertation aims to fill this scholarly gap by combining fieldwork with theoretical analysis and explaining ethnocultural processes in Pakistani society at a new methodological level.

Object of study: The historically established traditional culture, religious identity, and ethnosocial life of the Pashtuns and Baloch in Pakistan.

Subject of study: Traditional institutions, legal and regulatory systems in Pashtun and Baloch society and the processes of their contemporary transformation.

The main objective of this dissertation is to study the interaction of formal and informal institutions in contemporary Pakistan using the example of traditional informal institutions of the Pashtuns and Baloch (Pashtunwali and Balochmayyar), particularly those related to ethnic and ethnoreligious traditions. **To achieve this goal, the following research objectives were systematically pursued:**

- Identifying the historiographic and methodological foundations for studying the traditional culture and religious identity of the Pashtuns and Baloch; this is necessary for determining the institutional system in traditional South Asian societies and the social role of tribal factors;

- Identifying the historical aspects of statehood formation, legal foundations, and basic institutions in the context of the development of ethnic minorities in Pakistan. This objective will allow for a shared understanding of the inclusion of ethnic minorities in the institutional and normative structure of the state from the inception of statehood to the present day.

- Analyzing the socio-regulatory functions of informal Pashtun and Baloch institutions (Pashtunwali, Jirga, Balukhmayar) and understanding their current level of development. This study will explore these issues based on the author's fieldwork;

- Examining the religious and ethnic traditions of the Pashtun and Baloch in the context of "folk Islam" and ethnoreligious holidays. This aims to analyze the mechanisms of interaction between religious and ethnic components and their place in the social structure, as well as to analyze them for understanding the process of national integration.

- Examining issues of traditional culture and institutions among the Pashtun and Baloch peoples in the context of post-globalization. This aim is to understand the survival or disappearance of Pashtun and Balochi traditions in the contemporary context.

Research Methods:

The dissertation research utilized focus group interviews, semi-structured in-depth interviews, thematic analysis, expert questionnaires, text analysis, comparative analysis, and content analysis. Focus group interviews took into account respondents' religious, professional, social, and other backgrounds. Semi-structured in-depth interviews with key Pashtun and Baloch representatives helped identify aspects of identity and national solidarity at the cognitive level. This type of qualitative research is an important complement to other methods, allowing for the identification of ethnic sentiment and needs through intellectual representation. Thematic analysis is directly related to the two methods mentioned above. It was based on in-depth interviews, taking into account responses from focus group participants, as well as the main research question and hypotheses of the dissertation. The consent of the interview participants was obtained within the framework of the research project funded by the grant of the Ministry of Science and Higher Education of the Republic of Kazakhstan (2022-2024) AP14871064 "Ethnic, ethno-confessional discourse of the formation of a national state in South Asia (Afghanistan, India, Pakistan)", project manager: Doctor of Historical Sciences,

Professor L.G. Erekesheva, registered with the local ethics committee (LEC) of Al-Farabi Kazakh National University based on protocol No. IRB - A507 (IRB00010790 Al-Farabi Kazakh National University IRB#1).

The theoretical and methodological basis of the research.

It is based on advanced scientific approaches aimed at a comprehensive explanation of the formation and transformation of ethnic structures, traditional institutions, and religious identity in Pakistan. The methodological framework of the study is based on an interdisciplinary synthesis of the social sciences and combines theoretical concepts from history, cultural studies, anthropology, political science, and religious studies. This approach allows us to consider the object of study both as a static structure and as a changing social system over time. Primary theoretical support is provided by the socio-anthropological structural-functional approach. This approach views social institutions as an interconnected system that maintains the integrity of society. In the context of Pakistan, this approach helps explain the functional interaction between tribal structures, clan systems, traditional legal norms, and state institutions. Specifically, in the social organization of the Pashtuns and Baloch, traditional norms (jirga-jirga, customary law, and community regulation mechanisms) are analyzed as parallel institutions coexisting with formal state structures.

The second important theoretical framework is the symbolic interactionist approach. This approach asserts that the essence of social reality is formed through symbolic interactions between people. It recognizes that ethnic identity is formed through language, symbols, rituals, and cultural characteristics. Pashtunwali, or Balochi customs, are viewed as cultural structures with legal norms and symbolic meaning. From this perspective, ethnic identity is interpreted as a stable category and phenomenon, reproduced in everyday social experience. The third methodological approach is historical-institutionalism. This theory views the formation of social and political institutions as the result of long-term historical evolution. The structure of contemporary ethnic politics in Pakistan is closely linked to the administrative systems of the colonial period, particularly the governance practices of border regions. Therefore, this study places particular emphasis on the relatively immutable nature of institutions, that is, the revival of historical structures in the modern political system.

Scientific Innovations in the Dissertation.

The scientific innovations in this dissertation were formed based on the interaction of theoretical concepts and empirical data uncovered during the study. They aim to explain the functioning of ethnic structures and traditional institutions in Pakistani society from a new perspective, as well as to more deeply explore the transformative nature of religious and social identity. These innovations clarify issues insufficiently addressed in previous studies and expand the scholarly and analytical interpretation of the topic. The innovations achieved in this dissertation are described below:

- The study systematized historiographic and methodological works related to the study of the traditional culture and religious identity of the Pashtuns and Baloch, identifying theoretical contradictions and interpretive differences within them. The

results revealed the evolution of scholarly approaches used in the study of these ethnic groups and allowed for new conceptual conclusions;

A comprehensive analysis of the institutional system and the social role of the tribal factor in traditional South Asian societies was conducted, demonstrating that tribal structures function as both archaic and modern mechanisms of social regulation. The persistence of these institutions as a form of governance alongside, and sometimes competing with, the state was scientifically substantiated.

The process of Pakistani statehood formation was reexamined from a historical and institutional perspective, and the place of ethnic minorities (Pashtuns and Baloch) in the political system was analyzed in the context of evolutionary development. This study demonstrated that the marginalization and integration of ethnic groups are directly linked to the transformation of the state structure.

The existing regulatory system and institutional structures for ethnic minorities were analyzed, revealing that legislative reforms cannot completely eliminate ethnic inequality. Furthermore, the incompatibility of institutions at the federal and provincial levels was scientifically demonstrated as a factor in ethnopolitical instability.

- Informal Pashtun and Baloch institutions, such as Pashtunwali, Jirga, and Balukhmayar, were comprehensively examined as a system of social regulation, demonstrating their legal, moral, and conflict-solving analytical functions in society. It was established that these institutions coexist with the official state system and play an important role in maintaining public order.

- The mechanisms of interaction between religious and ethnic components were analyzed, revealing their integrative and regulatory functions in the social structure. The study's results demonstrated that religion is a factor in strengthening ethnic identity and a means of sociopolitical organization and mobilization.

The results of field research (interviews, observations, and opinions of local religious and community leaders) conducted in the cities of Lahore, Peshawar, and Islamabad, as well as in rural areas, were included in a scholarly publication for the first time. These empirical data refined theoretical conclusions and allowed for a convincing assessment of the dynamics of contemporary processes of ethnic and religious transformation.

Practical significance of the research.

The practical significance of this dissertation research is determined by the fact that it is one of the first scientific works in the Kazakh language that comprehensively examines the traditional culture and religious identity of Pakistan's ethnic communities. In this regard, the results of the study will be widely used in scientific, educational, governmental, and expert structures in Kazakhstan. First and foremost, this work will expand the documentary and theoretical base of Oriental studies in Kazakhstan and contribute to the formation of high-quality scientific content in the Kazakh language related to the South Asian region. In this regard, the results of the study can be used in research institutes under the Ministry of Science and Higher Education of the Republic of Kazakhstan, including centers for Oriental studies, international relations, and regional studies. Furthermore, the research materials will play an important role in the educational process of higher education

institutions. The results of this study can be used in the development of specialized courses and electives in the specialties of "Regional Studies," "Oriental Studies," "International Relations," and "Religious Studies" at the L.N. Al-Farabi Kazakh National University, L.N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University and other leading educational institutions. Particularly given the shortage of scientific literature in Kazakh, this work could become an important teaching and methodological resource for undergraduate and graduate students.

The practical significance of the study also has implications for public administration. For analytical institutions such as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Institute for Strategic Studies under the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, and the Kazakhstan Institute for Strategic Studies under the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, scientifically based information on ethnic and religious processes in Pakistan can be useful in making foreign policy decisions. This is particularly relevant in developing political, economic, and cultural cooperation between Kazakhstan and Pakistan. It is worth noting that the study's results can also be used in the work of the Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan. Comparative use of Pakistan's experience in strengthening interethnic harmony, preserving cultural diversity, and ensuring social stability has practical significance. Furthermore, the study's results are also useful for non-governmental organizations and think tanks. Centers conducting social research, organizations focused on developing intercultural dialogue, and structures participating in international projects can utilize the empirical data and scientific findings of this work in their work. In particular, information on the interaction of ethnic and religious factors plays an important role in explaining social processes in society.

Testing the research results.

The key findings of this work are supported by the academic community's approval, publication discussions, and peer review. The key findings and scientific results related to the research topic have been published in domestic and international scientific journals and have undergone the appropriate peer-review process. Specifically, the article "Historiographical Aspects of Pashtun Culture in Pakistan" was published in *Vestnik Istorii*, No. 4 (107) (<https://doi.org/10.26577/JH.2022.v107.i4.0142>). The article aims to define the theoretical and methodological foundations of the dissertation, which systematically analyzes the historiographic trends in the study of Pashtun culture. This publication played a significant role in establishing the scientific validity of the research. In addition, he worked as a research fellow within the framework of the grant-funded scientific project AP14871064 "Ethnic, ethno-confessional discourse of the formation of a national state in South Asia (Afghanistan, India, Pakistan)" of the Ministry of Science and Higher Education of the Republic of Kazakhstan (2022-2024). Project Manager: Doctor of Historical Sciences, Professor Erekesheva L.G. Within the framework of the project, an overseas scientific research trip to the Islamic Republic of Pakistan was made from May 3 to 11, 2023. Field research was conducted as part of the trip. From 02.04.2023 to 03.05.2023, he completed an overseas scientific internship at the University of the Punjab in Lahore and the University of Peshawar in the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. From 14.05.2023 to

29.05.2023. During this period, while in Ankara, at Hacı Bayram Veli University in the Republic of Turkey, he received research consultations from his foreign supervisor, Dr. Tuna Yıldız. To exchange experiences, he attended lectures by this foreign supervisor. On April 5-6, 2024, at the international conference "Creating a Nation-State in South Asia: Ethnicity, Religion, Traditions", held as part of the celebration of the 90th anniversary of the Al-Farabi Kazakh National University, a report on the topic "The Legal Framework of Pakistan and the Cultural Identity of the Pashtuns" was presented, and a scientific analysis of the cultural identity of the Pashtuns from the perspective of the tribal structure, Islamic worldview, and traditional ethical code was conducted. Based on the research work carried out in 2024, a scientific analysis of the social role and functioning of tribal structures in traditional societies was conducted in the "Bulletin of the Kazakh National University. Oriental Studies Series" (No. 1 (108) <https://doi.org/10.26577/JOS.2024.v108.i1.07>). This work made it possible to clarify the main conclusions of the theoretical part of the dissertation. Aspects of the study related to interethnic and religious processes were reflected in the article "Discourse of Ethnic and Religious Minorities in Modern Pakistan," published in the Bulletin of the Kazakh National University. Religious Studies Series, No. 2 (38), 2024. <https://bulletin-religious.kaznu.kz/index.php/relig/article/view/636/411>. This work analyzed the relationships between ethnic and religious groups in modern Pakistan and their reflection in public discourse, which complemented the content of the dissertation. Furthermore, international validation of the research results was conducted through a joint article entitled "The Tradition of Sufism in the Context of Historical Interaction: The Case of Kazakhstan and Pakistan." This article, published in 2025 in the academic journal "Turkish Culture and Haji Bektash Veli" (<https://doi.org/10.60163/tkhcbva.1596648>), examined issues of religious and cultural interaction between Kazakhstan and Pakistan. This publication demonstrated the relevance of the research topic in the international academic community and its significance for comparative studies.

Structure and scope of the dissertation. The dissertation consists of a list of definitions and abbreviations, an introduction, three chapters, a conclusion, and appendices. The main body of the work includes three chapters: the first and second chapters consist of two parts, and the third chapter consists of three parts. The final section summarizes the research and presents the main findings, and the appendices provide additional material.