

## SYMBOLS OF THE REGIONAL CULTURE OF THE NORTH CAUCASUS

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In this article the authors develop synthesis of axiological and symbolic approaches to the analysis of the regional culture of the North Caucasus. The culture of the North Caucasus people is represented as complex structured set of symbols. Most of the cultural symbols of people of the North Caucasus have their origins in folk mythology, folklore, religion, art and history. In the post-Soviet period search for symbols which are capable to integrate all people of the Caucasus became particularly actual. Hence, the authors refer to the results of opinion polls which can contribute to the search for new generally valid symbols of the North Caucasus.

Key words: symbol, regional culture of the North Caucasus, symbolic system of culture of the North Caucasus

Symbol is an ancient and universal non-verbal means of culture. The philosopher Ernst Cassirer named a man in Latin as “animal symbolicum” (“a symbolic animal”) [11]. L. White sees origin and basis of the culture in the symbol [24, p.79]. Phenomenon of the symbol appears to be in culture of all people of the world from the earliest times. The symbol serves as sensually-perceived form for ideal spiritual content expression. The phenomenon of the symbol is the object of careful attention of philosophers [5,11,12,19,34,36], sociologists [30,31,32,33,35], culturologists [2,3,8,13,18,24,37].

The word “symbol” originates from Ancient Greek «σύμβολον», which has the next meanings: 1) “sign”, “feature”; 2) “password”, “signal”, “sensual sign”, “symbol”; 3) “portent”, “omen”. Classical Greek verb «συμβλω» served as the basis for formation of this word” that means: “to throw off to one place”; “to merge”, “to connect”. Dialectical approach to analysis of the symbol [12,13,18,19] enables to discover dialectical nature in the symbol: it unites in itself ideal and material, concrete and abstract, individual and general, rational and irrational.

It is emphasized two constituents in the symbol – esoteric (from Ancient Greek «εσωτερικός» – “internal”, “concealed”, “secret”) and exoterical (from Ancient Greek «εξωτερικός» – “external”). Dialectics of esoteric and exoterical constituents develops in the symbol in the process of perception and comprehension of the symbol by subjects of Cross-cultural communication. We can retrace peculiar dialectics of these two constituents of the symbol in the history of civilization development.

Symbolic approach to the analysis of culture enables to imagine culture in the form of symbolic system. Symbolic system of culture is a total of symbols, where ideas, presentations, ideals, religious faiths, norms and values which appear to be foundational for cultural activity of a definite social community are expressed.

The objective of the given research is to realize historico-cultural reconstruction and philosophical analysis of symbolic system of the North Caucasus region culture. Regional culture of the North Caucasus is an object of high scientific interest for many Russian scholars [1,4,6,10,20,23,25,26,27,28,29].

Caucasus symbolic system as complex structure which according to different characteristics can be divided into the following groups: geographical (North Caucasus, Central Caucasus, Transcaucasia); political and territorial (North Caucasus republics as part of Russian Federation, South Ossetia, Abkhazia, Transcaucasia countries: Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan); cultural (traditions originality of artistic culture, music, way of life, cookery and etc.); ethnical; religious.

About 50 nations speaking various languages and dialects are living in the North Caucasus. The Caucasus is called as “a country of mountains and a mountain of nations”. Languages of the North Caucasus nations are referred to three large language families: North Caucasian, Altaic (Turkic group) and Indo-European (Iranian, Slavic and Armenian groups). Nations who have original cultural traditions, values and norms, keeping to various religions, (Islam plays the most significant role) live in the Caucasus. The Russians, the Cossacks, the Ukrainians, the Belorussians, a part of the Ossetians confess Orthodoxy; the Adygeis, the Abazins, Circassians, a part of the Ossetians, the Kabardians, the Balkars, the Karachais, the Nogais, the North Caucasian Turkmen – Muslims - sunni; almost all nations of Dagestan, the Chechen and the Ingush – Muslims – sunni of shafiite doctrine. The representatives of Islam Shi'ite movement live in the South Dagestan. The most part of Tats (Mountain Jews) confess Judaism.

The North Caucasus is the bridge, connecting Russia with Central Asia and Middle East, Transcaucasia nations, Iran and Turkey. It is the point of intersection of important trade, linear routes and directions. Over a period of centuries-long history numerous ethnoses of the Caucasus contacted with the regions of the North and South, West and East interacted with each other. The formation of the North Caucasus cultural integrity became the result of the given cross-cultural interactions. R. Abdullatipov determines Caucasian civilization as the most complicated historico-cultural system. The North Caucasus is a unique original integrity of politico-social and socio-economic relations between cultures and nations [1]. General features of the Mountain nations are close blood-related and community-settling forms of self-organization, uniform customs, similar semi-patriarchal social way of life, interconnected forms of material culture (type of accommodation, household utensils, ethnic cuisine and etc.), similar values and norms of etiquette (veneration of ancestors' earth, family (patrimonial) genealogy, freedom cult and etc.). Self-consciousness of the North Caucasian nations is based on the general historical past, mythology, fairy tales and legends.

Regional culture of the North Caucasian nations is focused on tradition. Traditions have an ancient history, throwing back to tribal culture. Amplification of the high moral authority of older age people, particularly solicitous attitude to family-patrimonial honor, hospitality, traditions of neighbors blood-related attitudes and mutual aid, custom of respectful attitude towards woman are referred to the base elements of mountain nations culture. Axiologically-normative principles of the North Caucasian culture manifested in sociocultural institutes. This is the institute of ancients, institute of hospitality, custom of children upbringing in another family, custom of Caucasian fraternization [21].

In the Caucasus the important role of public affairs management is belonged to the institute of ancients. Morally-axiological attitudes of mountaineers are expressed in such phenomenon as gerontocracy – veneration and respect of elder people. It presupposes a strict hierarchy “elder- junior”, delegation to elder people of all possible authorities. In the second part of XIX century in the Kabardian society the word “elder” referred not so to biological as to social age. Social age was influenced by: personal factor (people who have such qualities as courage, intellect, proficiency, eloquence and also moral qualities were respected); estate factor and material factor; related factor (person's proximity to noble and rich surnames promoted his status in the society, however, proximity could be blood or adjusted through custom of children upbringing in another family, adoption or fraternization).

Hospitality is a virtue, respected by Caucasian nations. It is an epicentrum of international contacts, plays an important role in optimization of communication inside the ethnical group or with the other ethnical groups. Hospitality contributed to transmission and exploration of cultural values of neighbor nations. Custom of hospitality consisted in responsibility to receive a newcomer without reference to ethnical or religious affiliation, the place of his permanent residence (even from enemy country). For instance, Kabardian character of guest hosting depended from distance degree of the place a guest came. The most respected was a guest came from the farness. “Faraway guests” fell into the next groups: guests from remote countries, guests crossed over 3,5, 7 or 9 rivers, guests from other settlements. A guest from a noble family was received as guest came from the farness.

Ethnic culture of the North Caucasian nations differs with its special development of ethnical behavioral norms. All diversity of social ranks and etiquette norms more or less amounts to binary oppositions having common denominator “dominance – obedience”. It manifests in the following modifications: top–bottom, front – back, right–left, centre– periphery, the best– the worst, man – woman, the eldest–the youngest, noble – ordinary, guest– host, strange–own, cater-cousin–relative. Thus, during the meeting of two men firstly the youngest in age or in social status greets the older one. It is considered to be irreverential if immediately after the parting the youngest man turns his back upon the older one. During any meeting the centre of occupied space is a place for the oldest people, periphery – for the youngest people. In hospitality ceremonies the guest has etiquette privileges in front of the host independent from the age and rank. It should be noted that historical changes affecting society status system lead to changes of this norms. For instance, these days one does not drink a loving-cup in the etiquette of solemn tableful, since all the guests have their individual glasses.

Untill the beginning of XX century institutions of custom of children upbringing in another family and custom of Caucasian fraternization had a particular meaning. The main point of custom of children upbringing in another family consisted in giving children to other family for upbringing. It was common between Cossacks and mountaineers to give their children for upbringing from Cossack villages to mountain villages and vice versa that gave them knowledge of foreign language, reading and writing (Russian, Arabic), customs and etc. The main point of custom of Caucasian fraternization consisted in that two persons belonged to different families, tribes or nations entered into close friendly relations and accorded assistance and defense to each other in necessary situations. In conditions of feudal civil discords custom of Caucasian fraternization promoted to communication between nations of the North Caucasus, formation their economical and cultural relations with the neighboring Russian and Cossack population, strengthening friendly connections. This institute was a means for reconciliation of enemies and arranging of other moot points. As A.D. Tleuzh marks, the institute of ancients, hospitality, public meetings despite on significant influence of time remain as “load-bearing elements” in social and spiritual life of Caucasian people, though, many details has been already lost [23].

Traditions of Caucasian people include etiquette regulating communication and behavior of people with each other in ordinary situations [27]. For instance, an ideal person in Vainakh etiquette even alone with himself should correlate his actions with opinion of “his society” with “what will people say” if they suddenly find out, see, and hear. Ideological and value core of the North Caucasian culture is morally-ethical codes (for instace the Adygeis have “adygage”). Morally-ethical code is an important factor of style and way of life, regulator of individual and social behavior, basis of an ethnical identification, factor of communication. The notions of humanity, respect, intelligence, courage and honor are included into the core structure of “adygage” [17, p. 53]. Morally-ethical code of the Dagestanis is based on notions ях1 (“moderation”), namus, courage, intelligence (chastity). “Ях1” means patience, moderation, firmness, honesty, call of duty and responsibility. The notion “courage” includes nobility, godliness, industry, honesty, respect for elders, feeling of honor and self-esteem, mercy to feeble people, bravery and stoutness. “Intelligence” implies chastity, godliness, modesty, industry, fidelity, fine manners. “Namus” includes in itself ability for emission, generosity, obligingness, compassion, affability. Personal dignities and interests in etiquette are always subordinated to social [16, p.91–92].

Religion is an important source of the symbols which are significant elements of the symbolic system of the North Caucasus. Islamic symbolic dominates in the modern system of religious symbols. At the same time we note that the majority of symbols on the coat-of-arms and flags of the modern North Caucasian republics ascend to heathen beliefs till Christian and Islamic times. For instance, solar sign with cambered beams pointing to rotating direction in solar system is presented on the coat-of-arms and flag of the Republic of Ingushetia. Herewith, heathen symbols were undergone by another interpretation in accordance with conceptually-notional attitudes of the world religions. For instance, green color in the symbolics of the North Caucasian people is not only a sign of Islam, but it is also interpreted as an ancient symbol of nature, fertility, and perennial youth. As

noted above, the symbol can simultaneously have esoteric meaning and exoterical signification. It depends on how a perceiving person will “open” it for himself, what he will “see”, comprehend through the symbol and what he will not. The symbol can opens something and at the same time conceals something. The meaning of the esoteric symbol consists in covering of the truth from un-initiated people.

Since ancient times non-verbal communications have played an important role among the North Caucasus nations [21]. In ancient times resort for these forms was induced by necessity of common ground approaches search among people speaking different languages and dialects. The North Caucasus nations enclosed from the all sides by mountains, other paramilitary nations and situated at the junction of war conflict elaborated the general rules of communicative cooperation. For instance, traditional communication norms of the Dagestanis are characterized by minimal using of mime and gestures – this situation generally concerns male part of the population. Partly, it can be described by military way of life and resulting from it moderateness of emotional splashes and in some degree Islam influence [14, p.175].

In the literary work “Hadji Murad” Russian writer Lev Tolstoy describes view, smile, silence, apposition of hands to the chest to express contradictory and complicated inner world of human feelings and thoughts of mountaineers. Mountaineers resort to the gesture of applying hands to a chest in various situations – in a pure etiquette, ceremonial meaning and also as a symbolic expression of sincere feelings. In the Mountaineer etiquette silence can express life wisdom and fidelity to etiquette [7, p. 81].

Georg Gachev offered figurative and symbolic approach to the description of culture and analysis of its phenomena. He created conception of “cosmo-psycho-logos” as a unity of body (nature), soul (national character) and spirit (habit of thought, national logic). According to Gachev the first thing that determines the face of nation is nature, among which nation grows and does its history. It is a permanently operative factor. The image of mountains as world coordinates plays a great role in the art of Caucasian nations [8]. Mountains is a peculiar boundary dividing nations, regions, cardinal points. Mountains appeared to be as an embodiment of sacred powers and at the same time united an ordinary earthy world with the highest other world. Mountaineers’ character, their moderation and courage were like nature of mountains as it were a confluence, but nature in its turn harshly reflected on their face. Mount Elbrus is a famous symbol of Caucasus. Elbrus picture on the State Coat of Arms of the Karachayev-Circassian Republic signifies eternity, strength and grandeur.

Caucasus is one of the origin centers of the human civilization. It is no coincidence that Russian academic Yuri Zhdanov named Caucasus as “Eurasia solar plexus”. Caucasus is a native land of the main cereal – wheat. Golden wheatears on the Republic of Adygeya State Coat of Arms appear to be the emblem ascendant to primordial cult of a nature life-giving strength.

The Ark of Noah is connected with Caucasus in mythology. The antique hero mighty Hercules was born here. Prometheus who gifted fire to people was enchained to the mountain of Caucasus. Since ancient times and up to this date some peculiar symbols have been continuing to play an important role in cross-cultural communications in the North Caucasus. Taking into account analysis of mythology writings, religious texts, folklore, works of literature, pictorial art, architecture and also philosophical analysis of national symbol of the North Caucasus republics we come to the point that the following symbols – eagle, mountains, the Sun, green colour are considered to be the most characteristic symbols for the North Caucasian culture in whole. The eagle is a symbol of courage, wisdom and freedom. Fight motive of the eagle and snake is widely spread in folklore of Caucasian nations. The eagle on the Republic of Ingushetia state emblem is interpreted as a symbol of nobility and courage, wisdom and fidelity. The Vainakhes particularly worshiped the Sun as a source of light and warmth. The basic element of the given sun cult was fire ruled by the Mother of fire. The hero of Nart epos Sausryko on his fiery flying horse is placed on the Republic of Adygeya emblem [21].

According to Oswald Spengler “soul” of culture chooses its “greatsymbol” from which as if from embryo it forms all organs and tissues. Culture can be studied by its symbolic forms. The

tower as united historico-social education acts in the quality of great symbol of the North Caucasian culture. Tower-shaped symbols of mountaineers' housebuilding play a special role in traditional culture. This is a descriptive significant confirmation of power, religious articles of belief, unity of nation. "The North Caucasian tower-shaped constructions symbolize family, its honor, power, dignity and unity. Intensity and general significance of tower-shaped symbolic are based on multiform semantics of the world tree of life mythological images centre of micro- and macro-space of universe" [20, p.150]. As S.D. Sulimenko supposes, tower is a homebuilding model of mythological creation which at the same time appears to be a real creation in other words building. The building had to defend a person from hostile chaos. Social (juridical, moral, religious) characteristics of traditional Caucasian society concentrate in it. Space of the traditional mountaineers' dwelling represents itself structure of symbolical oppositions: man and woman; father and children; host and guests. The central column and fireplace with a chain serve as conceptual and solid axis of this structure. The central column of the most part of Caucasian nations has its name which corresponds to its basic spatially-symbolical function – to fix the main behavioral norms of a patriarchal family. The central column of the Avars in translation means "column of the root" (in the meaning of generation), of Balkars "column-father". The central column is a symbol of generation, patrimonial dwelling.

Astral symbols, pictures of mountain plants and various animals, antlers and etc. have an important role in the popular visual art of the North Caucasus. Totemic legends about bird, wolf, sheep, deer, eagle, bear, horse, goat, cow, dog, and snake are widely spread among all Caucasian nations. The part of these legends entered into Nart epos. In mythology of Vainakh nations the birth of life on the earth is connected with white bird – the symbol of celestial sphere. Mountaineers consider sheep to be a sacred animal who carries over the Sun in its horns through underground world to celestial world. For instance, in ancient Ossetia there was some kind of heathen ritual according to which women brought sheep figurines to sanctuary and asked "sacred sheep" to give them children.

Styled images of sword, cup, daggers, horns for drinking, shield were widely spread in visual art of the North Caucasian nations. For instance, the Adygeis particularly worship symbols of fire, the Sun, cup, hearth, weapon (sword is in the first place) [6]. The cult of sword was spread in the practice of military hunt. People swore by the weapon, exchange of weapon strengthened socially-status relations between generations.

The cup is considered to be as a symbol of generosity and also merits for brave behavior. The cup represented a symbol of high rank in medieval Cirkassia. In the past obtaining of the strange enemy tribe cup was the strongest motivation for the Adygeis. Custom of honorary horn or cup presentation is widely spread in the North Caucasian culture. A picture of a cup or a cup itself was an attribute of aristocraticism, elite way of life and equestrian culture.

The image of courage and strong warrior-hero, who earned fame by feat of arms for the sake of honor and dignity of its generation, takes the important place in the folklore, literature and visual art (for instance, images of Mansour, Hadji Murad, Shamil). An ideal of Nart hero is painted in all-caucasian epos "Narter", some of his qualities such as: firmness, fearlessness, confirmation of truth and justice, aid to feeble one, love for freedom, nobility, and generosity are emphasized. Oath in front of generation referred to the number of ancient Nart customs, bravery in battle was appreciated, restraint from food was also greeted, but the most important role played respect for woman. Leader authority in Caucasian sphere was as a rule "provided by personal courage, military daring and observance of the peculiar code of honour, jointly determining the status of a horseman" [10, p.260]. Moral code of a horseman is still actual.

Through the centuries the history of the North Caucasian ethnical cultures is closely connected with the history of Russian civilization. One of the peculiarities of cross-cultural communications in this region manifests in it. Powerful expansion of Russian culture from the XIX century and to the present day contributes to modernized process of traditional inclusion of communities to achievements of Occidental civilization. This is expressed in economics industrialization, development of science absorbing industries, health service and etc. Spreading of electronic mass-

communication tools in the second part of XX century (television, radio, and internet) contributes to conformation of mass culture samples and values in the North Caucasus and Kalmykia. Changes touch the whole way of life of people – clothes, decoration and interior of dwelling, etiquette, food ration, behavior, mentality. Russian language plays a great role in cross-cultural communication, it provides access for nations to the world cultural achievements, and also from the middle of XX century it plays a monopolistic role as international communication language. At the same time one can observe a significant influence of the North Caucasian and Kalmykia nations on Russian culture. Since XIX century there was a very close interaction of Caucasian cultures with subculture of Cossacks and culture of Russian settlers in the North Caucasus. This reflected on the way of life (on customs, clothes, cuisine, decoration of houses, songs, dances and etc.) and traditions (custom of fraternization; technologies of winemaking, beekeeping and etc.) of all interrelated nations. For instance, significant number of words from Arabic and Turkic languages came into lexis of Russian language. Poetical legends of the mountaineers and Kalmucks their songs, dances, artistic handicraft, architecture had a strong influence on spiritual and material development of Russian culture. Caucasus appeared to be a source for creation of Russian works of art for Russian poets, writers, artists, musicians and thinkers (A. Pushkin, M. Lermontov, N. Ogarev, A. Griboyedov, V. Vereshchagin, M. Glinka, etc.).

Therefore, we would like to conclude the following. It is important to note that spiritual unity of Russian nations is based on general cultural ideals, values and norms. As the result of long cross-cultural communication history between Russia and the North Caucasus, from one hand symbols of Russian culture actively entered into system arsenal of the region nations cultural symbolic, therefore, added them to conceptually-axiological basis of Russian national culture. From the other hand, symbols of the North Caucasus nations became a part of Russian culture.

The North Caucasus is a complicated symbolic system of culture comprising ancient and modern mythological, ethnical, social, religious, artistic, political (including state) symbols. These symbols have certain traditions in the interpretation within the framework of ethnocultural and religious contexts (in this case esoteric aspect of symbols expressing special meanings, ideals and values shows itself). Exoteric aspect of symbols (there symbol acts as a form for popular meanings expression) manifests in that symbols torn from its traditional context distort within the framework of mass culture and advertising. That is why culturally-ethnographical meanings and significances studying of basic political, cultural and religious symbols of the North Caucasus nations is able to become a certain contribution to studying of deep spiritual and axiological the North Caucasian nations culture basis.

Caucasus symbolic system has as statistical so dynamic characteristics. From the viewpoint of statics the Caucasus model is invariable and specifically in figuratively-symbolic context it appears to be expression of traditionally transmitted ideas, notions, values, stereotypes. From the viewpoint of dynamics the model of Caucasus is changing in the process of its historico-cultural and socially-political development. “The North Caucasus is not just a regional notion – it is a territory of historically developed communion, a peculiar laboratory where models of nations collaboration are evaluated, their capability to survive in extreme conditions of moral and social commotions is examined” [29, p. 73].

The North Caucasian culture is rather static in comparison with more dynamical European culture. To some extent, this is explained by the fact that ethnicity has a greater value in the North Caucasian culture. In the North Caucasus the category “ethnicity” is identified with such axiological notions as truth, veracity, honor, justice and wisdom. “The given phenomenon forms a special relation of a person to dignity, truth and freedom. “Caucasian” sees an ideal model of his life in ethnicity. It appears to be an immanent regulator of activity, behavior and communication of an individual in Caucasian culture. It is a really active phenomenon”, as A.A. Anikeyev writes [4, p.40]. Social and economic factors slightly influence on ethnicity informative components.

Ethnicity did not lose its meaning in conditions of Russian society social transformation. On the contrary, in Caucasus the interest of nations to ethnical mythology, religion, ancient customs and ceremonies intensified from 90-ies of XX century. In the post-Soviet period the North Caucasus

nations in the time of choosing state symbols referred to the ancient ethnical symbols. Majority of the given symbols ascend to primitive communal times, their functioning in culture connects with heathen cults. They bear the impress of totemic visions in other words belief in supernatural connection and blood proximity of generation with some animal, plant or subject. Thus, the symbol of panther on North Ossetia - Alania emblem ascends to ancient Scythians cult visions whose descendant are considered to be the nowadays Ossetians. It denotes military bravery, dexterity and strength. The panther is personification of beauty, strength and courage. In symbolic sense it means that "Ossetian nation is brave and self-sacrificing in fight with enemy like a panther and considers retreat beneath his dignity" [15, p.21].

It is particularly interesting to note the following fact. In modern age artificial creation of the North Caucasus new symbols called to form a brand of the given region occurs. Brand of the North Caucasus has a number of constituents: geographical, political, economical, tourist, advertising. To begin with, the North Caucasus represents a unique geography-climatal region with a particular mountain relief, warm climate, rich flora and fauna. It is a place where a lot of fruits and vegetables grow, produce wines. Among brands capable to become marker of Caucasus as economic, trade region we can mention mineral and table waters having healing qualities ("Narzan", "Slavyanovskaya", "Arkhyz" and others), cuisine of the Caucasians. Secondly, Caucasus – is All-Russian sanatorium: sanatoriums and holiday hotels, camps, sports and fitness complexes are situated there. In historico-cultural aspect Caucasus is a cradleland of ancient civilizations, a place of people, cultures and world religions meetings. Various tourist routes are developed there and also new sport objects are building.

In November 2013 one of the authors realized social quiz among students of the Rostov branch of Russian Customs Academy to analyse the North Caucasus brand problem formation. Approximately 139 people at the age from 18 to 22 took part in this quiz. The following conclusions which served as a basis for the North Caucasus culturally-symbolic system modelling in modern period became the results of the conducted research.

About 86 % of respondents told that the North Caucasus is associated with the mountain system and only 7 % of respondents connect the image of Caucasus with the Black sea coast and 5 % with Sochi city. Overwhelming majority of respondents (90 %) consider Elborus as a universal symbol of Caucasus and only 10 % consider the symbol to be Red meadow. Among the most significant symbols were mentioned the following: tower (16 %), cup (20 %), jug (30 %), and weapon (50 %). Among Caucasus fauna representatives were emphasized the following animals: eagle (83 %), the Black sea dolphin (10 %), panther (7 %). Caucasian cuisine can be considered as a part of Mediterranean cuisine included into the list of world heritage UNESCO. It is interesting to note that Yason brought wine to Greece from the Caucasus [9].

To the question "What products can serve as the brands of the Caucasus?" respondent answered in the following way: wine-brandy production – 58 %, citrus fruits (oranges, mandarins, lemons) – 34 %, dried fruits (fig, raisin, Sharon fruit) – 25 %, spices – 27 % [22]. To the question "What kind of dishes do you prefer in the Caucasian cuisine?" responses divided into the following variants: shashlik (78 %), khachapuri with cheese (37 %), mutton pies with meat (26 %), adjika (acid condiment) (29 %).

Consequently, symbolic system of the North Caucasus nations culture is a unique system of images and symbols conditioned by naturally- geographical, historic-ethnical, socially-economic and spiritually-cultural factors.

In April-May 2015 one of the authors conducted the next quiz among students of the Rostov branch of Russian Customs Academy. About 120 people at the age from 18 to 25 took part in this quiz. To the question "Did conduction of Olympic Games" influence on improvement of Russian image on the international scene?" 52 % of respondents answered "yes", 40 % – "no", 8 % – "don't know". To the question "Do you think the Olympic Games in Sochi in 2014 contributed to the unity of the Russian people?" 97 % respondents answered "yes".

Since 1990s of XX century up to the present day Russia has been experiencing a period of regular alternation of symbolic systems – post-Soviet symbolic system where notions, norms and

values embody, reflecting and at the same time forming modern spiritual reality of Russian society is created. The most contradictory points of view regarding history of the North Caucasus its mutual relations with history of Russia in whole exist in modern science. “Ethical code of Caucasianist” was accepted on the II international forum of caucasianists, which took part on 15-16<sup>th</sup> of October in Rostov-on-Don (Russia) in the context of long-felt need to release the science of Caucasus from superfluous politicization, stereotyping, professionalism promotion and forming of corporative culture of scientists-caucasianists.[27, 30].

Thus, in conditions of sociocultural crises the need in searching of symbols which in conceptually-axiological sense could joint various social, ethnical, religious, political groups among themselves emerges. In terms of the North Caucasus image formation it is important to concentrate attention on that specific symbols which could serve to ideals and values considered to be fundamental for the progressive development of region and Russia in whole. In this regard the symbol of hand shake on Dagestan emblem as a sign of different nations friendship is especially important. Values of tolerance, mutual respect, neighborliness and intercollaboration obtain special significance.

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