

SOCIAL AND POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY



UDC 130.2

Original article

<https://doi.org/10.23947/2414-1143-2024-10-1-14-18>



Holiday as an Effective Factor of Social Evolution

Tatyana O. Berdnik¹ ✉, Alissa Stytsenko²

¹Don State Technical University, Rostov-on-Don, Russian Federation

²Fashion DNA, Docklands VIC 3008, Australia

✉ tatiana@berdnik.me

Abstract

Introduction. The article examines the phenomenon of holiday in the context of its influence on civilizational processes and the development of the socio-cultural environment. The relevance of the topic is determined by the fact that through the holiday with its stable social rituals, the formation of the worldview and moral attitudes of society occurs. In particular, holiday events are one of the most effective tools for patriotic education. In addition, a festive mood, which arouses positive feelings in a person, helps to neutralize stress as an urgent problem of modern life, oversaturated with information, including that of a negative nature. The goal of the work is to provide conditions for holding festive events within the framework of traditional local cultures and their mutual integration in the context of globalization. The implementation of the goal determined the solution of a number of tasks including the study of the genesis and evolution of holidays, their typology according to essential consequences, as well as their preservation as a phenomenon of the psychological health of society and others.

Materials and methods. The object of the study is a holiday as an important element of the social structure and an instrument of interpersonal communication. On the basis of a retrospective analysis and a descriptive method, the factors of the genesis and evolution of festive activities from the era of primitive society to the present are studied.

Results. Holiday is considered as a ritual and ritual system aimed at a complex task of a dualistic nature, on the one hand, fixing the signs of local cultures, on the other hand, mutual integration of cultures, the formation of a new cultural synthesis. The hypothesis is put forward that the holiday, like no other form of collective interaction, contributes to the sustainable consolidation of ideological and moral principles, ideas about the norms and rules of human society.

Discussion and conclusion. The significance of the holiday will be determined from the point of view of two aspects: biological and sacred. The biological approach considers the holiday as a necessary condition for the healthy mental life of individuals and society as a whole, since it saves from the tiring monotony of everyday life. The sacred significance of festive celebrations lies in the fact that a holiday is the most striking form of social activity. It is in the festive culture that the worldview of society is most effectively formed. The role of the holiday in the history of civilization is determined by its mission of consolidating social memory. Over time, the sacralization of holiday rituals was increasingly lost, but at the same time their influence on the development of all types of arts and entertainment culture grew.

Keywords: holiday, ritual, ritual activity, carnival, cultural synthesis

For citation. Berdnik T.O., Stytsenko A. Holiday as an effective factor of social evolution. *Science Almanac of Black Sea Region Countries*. 2024;10(1):14–18. <https://doi.org/10.23947/2414-1143-2024-10-1-14-18>

Научная статья

Праздник как эффективный фактор общественной эволюции

Т.О. Бердник¹ ✉, А. Стыценко²

¹Донской государственный технический университет, Ростов-на-Дону, Российская Федерация

²Fashion DNA, Докландс VIC 3008, Австралия

✉ tatiana@berdnik.me

Аннотация

Введение. Исследуется феномен праздника в контексте его влияния на цивилизационные процессы и развитие социокультурной среды. Актуальность темы определяется тем, что через праздник, с его устойчивыми социальными

ритуалами, происходит становление мировоззрения и моральных установок общества. Цель данной работы – исследование факторов влияния праздничных мероприятий на формирование традиционных локальных культур и их взаимную интеграцию в условиях глобализации. Реализация цели определила решение ряда задач, среди которых – изучение генезиса и эволюции праздников, их типологизация по существенным признакам, рассмотрение их как феномена психологического здоровья общества и других.

Материалы и методы. Объектом исследования выступает праздник как важный элемент социальной структуры и инструмент межличностной коммуникации. На основе ретроспективного анализа и описательного метода изучаются факторы генезиса и эволюции праздничной деятельности от эпохи первобытного общества до современности.

Результаты исследования. Праздник рассматривается как обрядово-ритуальная система, нацеленная на комплексную задачу дуалистического характера. С одной стороны, он служит закреплению признаков локальных культур, с другой – взаимной интеграции культур, формированию нового культурного синтеза. Выдвигается гипотеза о том, что праздник, как никакая другая форма коллективного взаимодействия, способствует устойчивому закреплению идеологических и морально-нравственных установок, представлений о нормах и правилах человеческого общежития.

Обсуждение и заключение. Значение праздника определяется с точки зрения двух аспектов – биологического и сакрального. Биологический подход рассматривает праздник как необходимое условие здоровой психической жизни отдельных личностей и общества в целом, так как он спасает от утомляющего однообразия обыденности. Сакральное значение праздничных торжеств состоит в том, что праздник представляет собой наиболее яркую форму социальной активности. Именно в праздничной традиции наиболее эффективно формируется мировоззрение общества. Роль праздника в истории цивилизации определяется его миссией закрепления социальной памяти. Со временем сакрализация праздничных ритуалов все больше утрачивалась, но при этом росло их влияние на развитие всех видов искусств и зрелищной культуры.

Ключевые слова: праздник, ритуал, обрядовая деятельность, карнавал, культурный синтез

Для цитирования. Бердник Т.О., Стыценко А. Праздник как эффективный фактор общественной эволюции. *Научный альманах стран Причерноморья*. 2024;10(1):14–18. <https://doi.org/10.23947/2414-1143-2024-10-1-14-18>

Introduction. The modern understanding of a holiday is usually interpreted as the antithesis of everyday activities and is associated with entertainment, recreation, enjoyment in the process of social communication, undetermined by the work process. Any holiday has quite specific historical and cultural roots and is dedicated to important events of special significance in the life of either human civilization as a whole (general holidays), or some social community (local holidays), or an individual, family, or group of people (personal holidays). Depending on the scale of the information occasion, the degree of personification of the festive event changes (from a mass one, covering large groups of people, to an intimate one in a narrow circle of interested participants). But in any case, festive events are a set of ceremonies that have a deep ideological and symbolic connotation.

Materials and methods. The history of the holiday as a socio-cultural phenomenon begins at the initial stage of formation of human society. To understand its place and significance in the formation of collective consciousness, this study relies primarily on the historical method, including retrospective analysis of the signs of the evolutionary development of holiday traditions from the proto-fest of the primitive era to the large-scale events of modern entertainment culture. The materials for this article were theoretical works in the field of philosophy, sociology and psychology, devoted to the scientific understanding of the phenomenon under study.

Results. The holiday has a direct connection with the social structure. The nature of festive events is mainly determined by the belonging of the holiday to the spheres of social life. In this regard, among mass celebrations there are historical, religious, political, sports, ethnographic, professional holidays, as well as holidays of art and culture. Currently, the phenomenon under study is characterized by significant diversity in the context of functions and tasks performed, cyclicity, scale of audience coverage and the form of mass celebrations. The most common types of modern festive events were formed in the process of the entire evolution of human civilization. Retrospective analysis of holidays allows us to identify its main types: theatrical performance, rally, parade, carnival, fair, gala concert, ball, exhibition, auction, contest, etc.

Russian philosopher, literary scholar, theorist of European culture and art M.M. Bakhtin defined the holiday as the most important primary form of culture, relating to the spiritual and ideological sphere of existence, to the sphere of other reality, to the sphere of ideals. According to Bakhtin, the holiday is the manifestation of human existence, which, on the one hand, contributes to the identification and consolidation of the signs of local cultures, on the other hand, becomes a factor of mutual integration of cultures and unity of peoples. The scientist argued: “Celebration always has an essential relation to time. It is always based on a certain and concrete concept of natural (cosmic), biological and historical time” [1, pp. 13–14].

It is possible to understand the essence of the phenomenon by studying the history of the origin and evolution of holidays. Most researchers of this issue agree that the prototypes of holidays were formed in the Mousterian

era (late Paleolithic) at the turn of 50–30 millennia BC. The first festive events were realized in the form of totemic rites connected with funeral and calendar-economic cults. The primitive (proto-fest) holiday was a religious and social system aimed initially at the transmission of certain meanings and consolidation of behavioral traditions, rather than entertainment and leisure activities.

The mystical beliefs of primitive people were based on the belief that various magical means could influence external nature and indirectly control the fate of the clan. According to the British sociologist and anthropologist J.G. Frazer, festive rituals were a form of primitive social magic. Researching and systematizing extensive material on the most ancient beliefs and folk customs in different regions of the world, Frazer came to the conclusion that the basis of magical ritual is the belief that it is possible to achieve any desired action by simply imitating it [2, p. 16]. Therefore, all members of the clan, guided by shamans, were actively involved in the staging of the event, which was understood as a guarantor of the well-being of clan existence.

Collective magic rituals became an important factor in the development of social communication and the basis for the emergence of not only religion, but also art. Based on non-speech communication, they involved all forms of nonverbal interaction: dance, mimicry, gestures, vocals. Later, to serve the event and strengthen its expressiveness, the rudiments of fine arts were formed: painting of the body, attributes used in the ritual, caves where the action was performed, etc. The emergence of documentary channels of information transmission (various images) contributed to the consolidation of ritual traditions and their more effective dissemination both in space and in time. Thus, the ritual action, dedicated to the achievement of a certain desired goal, received a stable script and ideological basis, choreographic and vocal accompaniment, spatial environment decorated with sign-symbolic images [3]. In addition, its holding has acquired a regular periodic character. With the obligatory collective participation of all tribesmen in magical rituals began to allocate persons, who were assigned specific social and, in a sense, professional roles. Obviously, the ancient rites trace the main features of a holiday in its modern sense.

Magical ritual as a prototype of a holiday can be considered an effective tool of social development of primitive society. Canadian philosopher and philologist G.M. McLuhan considered tangible and intangible artifacts as direct means of social communication. His methodological principle was based on the thesis about the determining influence of the evolution of communication channels on cultural and historical progress. According to McLuhan, “the spiritual and material progress of mankind is determined not by the tools of labor or the development of nature, not by economics, politics or culture, but by the technology of social communication, i. e. communication channels that people have” [4, p. 103]. The emergence of holiday culture contributed to the emergence and evolution of a wide variety of communication channels, the effectiveness of which was enhanced by the desire for figurative expressiveness and the formation of holiday consciousness.

If, at the stage of genesis, the feast was of local character and involved only members of one clan or tribe in the ritual complex, in the process of its evolution it turns into an effective factor of acculturation, contributing to the spiritual integration of different social and cultural systems. Tribes living on the same territory inevitably came into contact, which could have both hostile and unifying contexts. Cooperation was realized not only in military or economic spheres, but also in the form of free borrowing of each other's sacral traditions in the process of ritual and festive activities. As a result, a new cultural synthesis was formed, enriching the spiritual experience of the contacting social groups [5].

From the point of view of the biological aspect, the importance of holidays is determined by the possibility of switching from everyday tedious orderliness to physical and mental rest, to unusual actions, to a different daily routine. This elevation above the everyday brings variety into the habitual existence of a person, which is a necessary condition for creating psychological comfort and preserving mental health. Of particular importance is the fact that the worldview, useful from the point of view of society, was introduced not in an edifying violent form, but in a playful way – through entertainment, pleasure, and an elevated joyful mood, which had a more effective result. The French Dictionary of the Humanities, published in 1972, interprets the holiday as a phenomenon of socio-cultural dynamics, saying that it “is created around a special mythical plot and organizes, if not disorder, at least disruption of order, to obtain or strengthen in the public consciousness consent to the required order. The holiday is valuable insofar as the symbolism applied in this case and the person caused by it have value for the group” [6, p. 112].

A similar idea sounds in the work of the Austrian psychiatrist Z. Freud “Psychology of masses and analysis of the human self”. Studying the influence of various factors on social psychology, Freud came to the conclusion about the importance of periodically held holidays as a prerequisite for a healthy mental life of an individual and society as a whole. It is only during the period of festive events that a person is freed from the numerous prohibitions and restrictions imposed on him by social morality. Holiday celebrations become a psychological discharge, remove taboos from many subconscious and conscious actions existing in rational everyday life, and give a feeling of some affectation, excitement and freedom [7, p. 14].

Liberation from the constraints of everyday life generates a certain chaos, increased interest in the forbidden, and the leveling of moral boundaries usually protected by public morality and religion. The most popular and historically stable

holidays have always contradicted strict moral rules. This is especially true for folk festivals, even if they had religious overtones. It is enough in this regard to recall carnivals, which are still held in all regions of the world, preserving their centuries-old traditions and forms of organization. Carnivals are connected with the calendar-religious cycle and usually last 1–2 weeks before Lent. The peculiarity and attractiveness of carnivals was that the life of an entire city during their holding period was in sharp contrast to the everyday world order based on social segregation and strict socio-political regime. “In carnival, life itself plays, and the game for a time becomes life itself. This is the specific nature of carnival, a special kind of its being” [7, p. 13].

Social boundaries were eroded, class hierarchy was destroyed, and the rules of family relations were ignored. The opportunity to liberate oneself and break the norms of decency was provided by the fact that carnivals always had a masquerade character. Changing the appearance beyond recognition helped to avoid public condemnation and unpleasant consequences of excessively free behavior. Such temporary permissiveness in the conditions of the religious state with its endless prohibitions was so necessary for the mental health of society that even the church observed this “chaos” with tolerance. Having received a tumultuous outlet for emotions and relieved the accumulated mental frustration, society returned to a decent life until the next carnival. Thus, moral liberty, allowed during the period of carnival celebrations, not only did not destroy social foundations, but also contributed to the viability of a strict state regime without social explosions and upheavals [8].

Recognizing the significance of holidays as powerful stabilizers of social psychology, it is impossible to reduce the study of the issue only to the biological context. Another equally important aspect of the study of festive celebrations is sacral. Thanks to holidays, cultural traditions and values were assimilated and consolidated, respect for the history and achievements of human civilization was formed. Having arisen as a product of mythological consciousness, the holiday was a reflection of the worldview inherent in the primitive society, which united disparate individuals into a community. The spontaneous ideology of primitive society, which emerged as a way to preserve life, became the main factor of socialization and progress [9, 11].

Discussion and conclusion. With the development of civilization and the emergence of official religions, the importance of the holiday as an activity of people under the sign of a unifying idea increased. In the system of theological sciences of Christianity in the 19th century, Heortology, a scientific discipline studying the genesis and evolution of festive activity, was singled out. In the Russian-language version, the synonym term festivology is also accepted. Heortology considers holidays as a form of social activity, which can be an effective regulator and popularizer of Christian ideology [10].

Thus, in historical retrospect, a holiday can be considered as a mental aspect of the spiritual culture of human civilization. In modern reality, holidays have largely lost their ontological connection with religious tradition. At the same time, one of the main aspects of festive events has retained its relevance: the unity of all those gathered in an elevated joyful mood, when the exchange and consolidation of ideas is carried out most effectively. It is on this factor that the church has always relied, supporting and developing festive culture, turning a blind eye to some violations of strict religious norms. Thanks to the excellent organization of religious festivals, the humanities, fine and applied arts, literature, and theater developed rapidly. Many forms of theatricalized religious events gave the basis for the development of modern spectacular arts, which, in fact, left unchanged the structural characteristics and figurative and expressive techniques of their prototypes.

References

1. Bakhtin M.M. *Tvorchestvo Fransua Rable i narodnaya kultura Srednevekovya i Renessansa = The work of Francois Rabelais and the folk culture of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance*. Moscow: Khudozhestvennaya literatura; 1990. 543 p. (In Russ.).
2. Frazer J.G. *Zolotaya vetv: Issledovaniye magii i religii = The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion*. In 2 Vol. V. 1: Ch. I–XXXIX. Translation from English M. Ryklina. Moscow: TERRA; 2001. 528 p. (In Russ.).
3. Bagdasarova N.A. Neverbalnyye formy vyrazheniya emotsiy v kontekste raznykh kultur: universalnoye i natsionalnoye = Nonverbal forms of expression of emotions in the context of different cultures: universal and national. *Materials of the interuniversity seminar on linguistic and regional studies*. Moscow: MGIMO-University; 2006 (In Russ.).
4. McLuhan M. *Galaktika Gutenberga. Stanovleniye cheloveka pechatayushchego = The Gutenberg Galaxy: The Making of Typographic Man*. Translation from English IO. Tyurina. Moscow: Akademicheskii Proyeckt; 2020. 443 p. (In Russ.).
5. Ogurtsov A.P., Edelman V.A. *Akkulturatsiya = Acculturation*. Humanitarian portal: Concepts. Center for Humanitarian Technologies, 2002–2022. Available at: <https://gtmarket.ru/concepts/7180> (accessed: 08.01.2024) (In Russ.).
6. Lazareva L.N. *Istoriya i teoriya prazdnikov: uchebnoye posobiye = History and theory of holidays: textbook*. Chelyabinsk; 2010. 251 p. (In Russ.).
7. Sigmund F. *Psikhologiya mass i analiz chelovecheskogo Ya = Psychology of masses and analysis of the human self*. Moscow: Eksmo; 2023. 320 p. (In Russ.).

8. Sarantseva M.Ye. Kontsepsiya karnavala MM. Bakhtina kak obyasnitelnaya model kulturno-istoricheskikh transformatsiy = The concept of the carnival M.M. Bakhtin as an explanatory model of cultural and historical transformations. Collection of scientific articles based on the materials of the VI International Scientific and Practical Conference *Natsionalnyye kultury v mezhkulturnoy kommunikatsii = National Cultures in Intercultural Communication*. Minsk, April 08–09, 2021 Minsk: Kolograd; 2021. pp. 354–362 (In Russ.).

9. Shemyakin Ya.G. *Istoriya mirovykh tsivilizatsiy. XX vek = History of world civilizations. 20th century*. Moscow; 2001. 156 p. (In Russ.).

10. Grigoryev S.V., Frolov A.S. *Igra i prazdnik: Tezaurus po prazdnichno-igrovoy culture = Game and holiday: Thesaurus on festive and gaming culture*. Moscow: Moskova; 2006. 204 p. (In Russ.).

11. Klimenko I., Berdnik T. Meaning, Function and Design of Object in Culture. *Postmodern Openings*. 2018;9(2):110–119 URL: <https://doi.org/10.18662/po/22> (accessed: 08.01.2024) (In Russ.).

About the Authors:

Berdnik Tatiana Olegovna, Cand. Sci. (Philosophy), Professor, Head of the Department of Design. Don State Technical University, (1, Gagarin Sq., Rostov-on-Don, 344000, RF), [ORCID](#), tatiana@berdnik.me

Stytsenko Alissa, art director of Fashion DNA (9, Waterside Pl., Docklands VIC 3008, Australia), alissa@fashiondna.studio

Received 29.01.2024

Revised 18.02.2024

Accepted 18.02.2024

Conflict of interest statement

The authors do not have any conflict of interest.

The authors have read and approved the final manuscript.

Об авторах:

Бердник Татьяна Олеговна, кандидат философских наук, профессор кафедры дизайна, Донской государственный технический университет (РФ, 344000, г. Ростов-на-Дону, пл. Гагарина, 1), [ORCID](#), tatiana@berdnik.me

Стыценко Алиса, арт-директор компании Fashion DNA (9, пл. Ватерсайт, Докландс VIC 3008, Австралия), alissa@fashiondna.studio

Поступила в редакцию 29.01.2024

Поступила после рецензирования 18.02.2024

Принята к публикации 18.02.2024

Конфликт интересов

Авторы заявляют об отсутствии конфликта интересов.

Авторы прочитали и одобрили окончательный вариант рукописи.