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ASKIYA ART AS A SOCIO-PHILOSOPHICAL FACTOR IN PRESERVING INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE AND STRENGTHENING SOCIAL STABILITY IN NEW UZBEKISTAN

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Abstract: This study examines the distinctive characteristics of Askiya and Qiziqchilik, two unique forms of Uzbek oral folk art, as elements of the nation's intangible cultural heritage from a socio-philosophical perspective. The research analyzes their historical development, cultural foundations, and social functions, emphasizing their role in preserving national identity, historical memory, moral values, and cultural continuity in the context of New Uzbekistan. Furthermore, the study explores the transformation of these traditional art forms under globalization and digitalization, highlighting their significance in strengthening social cohesion, intercultural dialogue, and the spiritual and moral education of younger generations. The research employs historical, comparative, socio-philosophical, and cultural analysis methods to investigate the educational, communicative, and integrative functions of Askiya and Qiziqchilik. The findings demonstrate that these traditional performing arts should be regarded not only as folklore genres but also as important socio-cultural institutions that contribute to the development of critical thinking, civic consciousness, ethical communication, and cultural sustainability. The study also proposes practical recommendations for the preservation, digital documentation, educational integration, and international promotion of these cultural traditions in accordance with contemporary cultural policies and global heritage preservation principles.

The scientific significance of the research lies in providing a comprehensive socio-philosophical interpretation of Askiya and Qiziqchilik within the framework of intangible cultural heritage studies. The findings may contribute to future research in cultural studies, social philosophy, folklore, heritage preservation, and cultural policy while supporting national and international initiatives aimed at safeguarding Uzbekistan's intangible cultural heritage.

Keywords: Askiya; Qiziqchilik; Intangible Cultural Heritage; Social Philosophy; New Uzbekistan; National Identity; Cultural Heritage; Folk Art; Cultural Sustainability; Globalization.

Introduction

The twenty-first century has witnessed an unprecedented acceleration of globalization, rapid advances in information technologies, and the expansion of intercultural interaction. While these processes have significantly enhanced cultural exchange among nations, they have simultaneously intensified the risk of erosion and gradual disappearance of unique national traditions and cultural values. Consequently, the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage has become one of the most pressing scholarly and practical issues of contemporary society.

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Situated at the crossroads of ancient civilizations, Uzbekistan possesses a remarkably rich cultural heritage distinguished by its oral traditions, folk customs, performing arts, and literary legacy. Among the most outstanding manifestations of this heritage are askiya and qiziqchilik, two traditional forms of verbal and theatrical folk art that embody the intellectual capacity, aesthetic consciousness, ethical values, and social worldview of the Uzbek people. These artistic traditions represent complex cultural phenomena that have evolved over centuries while preserving their authenticity and social relevance.

Within the framework of New Uzbekistan, the restoration, preservation, and promotion of national cultural values have become strategic priorities of state policy. Guided by the principle of "For Human Dignity", comprehensive reforms have been implemented to strengthen cultural institutions, support artistic creativity, educate younger generations in the spirit of national values, and promote Uzbekistan's intangible cultural heritage internationally. In this context, askiya and qiziqchilik should be understood not merely as elements of folklore but as significant social institutions that contribute to spiritual development, civic consciousness, social cohesion, and cultural continuity.

At the global level, the preservation of cultural diversity has become one of the principal priorities of UNESCO and other international organizations. Contemporary cultural studies emphasize that safeguarding intangible cultural heritage extends far beyond preserving historical memory; it constitutes an essential factor in sustainable social development, national identity formation, intercultural dialogue, and social stability.

Among the various genres of Uzbek folklore, askiya occupies a distinctive position owing to its unique combination of improvisation, intellectual competition, rhetorical excellence, logical reasoning, philosophical wit, ethical norms, and collective communication. Therefore, askiya should not be perceived solely as humorous entertainment; rather, it functions as a sophisticated social mechanism that promotes moral reflection, strengthens interpersonal communication, and contributes to the regulation of social relationships through the power of language.

Likewise, qiziqchilik represents a traditional form of folk theatrical performance that artistically portrays everyday life, customs, professions, family relations, and social issues through satire and humor. Beyond its entertainment function, this artistic tradition cultivates aesthetic appreciation, critical thinking, social responsibility, and public awareness by encouraging audiences to reflect upon social realities and human behavior.

In today's digital society, the scientific study, digital preservation, and global dissemination of these traditional art forms through modern media platforms have become increasingly important. Digital technologies provide new opportunities for documenting, archiving, and promoting intangible cultural heritage while simultaneously creating challenges associated with commercialization, simplification of artistic expression, and the weakening of traditional performance schools.

Accordingly, the principal objective of this study is to examine the socio-philosophical significance of askiya and qiziqchilik in the development of New Uzbekistan, to substantiate their status as elements of intangible cultural heritage, and to identify contemporary strategies for their preservation and sustainable development under conditions of globalization.

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Intangible cultural heritage constitutes one of the most significant expressions of a nation's historical memory, spiritual worldview, and cultural identity. It encompasses traditions, customs, rituals, performing arts, oral literature, craftsmanship, and indigenous knowledge that are transmitted from generation to generation through oral communication and practical experience. Contemporary cultural studies regard intangible cultural heritage not merely as a legacy of the past but also as a dynamic social institution that contributes to sustainable development, cultural continuity, and social cohesion.

Within the rich tradition of Uzbek folklore, askiya and qiziqchilik occupy a unique position as highly developed forms of oral and performing arts. These traditions embody the aesthetic ideals, ethical principles, linguistic richness, intellectual creativity, and social philosophy of the Uzbek people. Beyond their artistic value, they perform important educational, communicative, and cultural functions by promoting kindness, tolerance, mutual respect, and social harmony.

Askiya is fundamentally based on verbal artistry, intellectual agility, and spontaneous improvisation. Participants demonstrate their rhetorical competence by producing meaningful, logically coherent, and aesthetically refined responses within a very limited period of time. Consequently, askiya serves not only as a form of entertainment but also as an informal "school of logic," cultivating analytical thinking, eloquence, creativity, and linguistic competence.

In contrast, qiziqchilik represents a traditional theatrical genre that depicts everyday life, customs, professions, family relationships, and various social issues through humor and satire. Rather than functioning solely as amusement, laughter in qiziqchilik serves as an effective mechanism of social criticism. By exposing human shortcomings and social contradictions in an artistic manner, this genre encourages audiences to reconsider their own behavior and contributes to moral education and civic responsibility.

From the perspective of social philosophy, society develops through the interaction of cultural values, social institutions, and human consciousness. Accordingly, askiya should be interpreted not simply as a folkloric genre but as a multidimensional socio-philosophical phenomenon.

First, askiya enhances the creative and intellectual potential of individuals. Successful performers must possess the ability to think rapidly, analyze complex situations, establish logical connections, and formulate persuasive responses instantly. Such intellectual qualities contribute significantly to the development of critical thinking and cognitive culture.

Second, askiya strengthens the culture of dialogue within society. Unlike verbal conflicts characterized by hostility or aggression, askiya is founded upon respect, wit, persuasive argumentation, and the ethical use of language. The superiority of words over violence reflects democratic principles of communication and promotes constructive interpersonal interaction.

Third, askiya serves as an effective instrument for transmitting moral values. Through humor and satire, virtues such as honesty, modesty, wisdom, generosity, and justice are praised, whereas arrogance, greed, hypocrisy, and other negative traits are criticized. This artistic approach stimulates self-reflection among audiences and encourages positive behavioral transformation.

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Finally, askiya plays a crucial role in strengthening national identity. Its rich linguistic expressions, proverbs, metaphors, historical references, and traditional imagery preserve the cultural memory of the Uzbek people while fostering respect for the native language and national heritage among younger generations. Consequently, askiya functions as a powerful medium for safeguarding cultural continuity and reinforcing national consciousness.

During the twenty-first century, rapid advances in information and communication technologies have created unprecedented opportunities for the transformation and dissemination of traditional performing arts. Today, askiya and qiziqchilik are presented not only in traditional public gatherings but also through television broadcasting, online platforms, and social media, enabling these art forms to reach broader national and international audiences. Nevertheless, digital transformation also presents several challenges, including the commercialization of traditional culture, the decline of artistic quality, the simplification of authentic national styles, and the gradual weakening of traditional master–apprentice schools of performance. Therefore, contemporary modernization should be accompanied by scientifically grounded cultural policies that ensure the preservation of authenticity while encouraging sustainable innovation.

Within the framework of the cultural reforms being implemented in New Uzbekistan, the preservation and sustainable development of askiya and qiziqchilik require a comprehensive institutional approach. In this regard, several strategic priorities deserve particular attention. These include the introduction of specialized academic courses in higher education institutions, the expansion of interdisciplinary research on intangible cultural heritage, the establishment of digital archives and electronic databases, the development of professional training schools for young performers based on the master–apprentice tradition, active participation in international cultural festivals, the application of artificial intelligence and digital technologies for documenting and cataloguing askiya performances, and the strengthening of international scientific cooperation.

The implementation of these measures will not only ensure the preservation of the authenticity of these traditional art forms but also enhance their relevance within contemporary society and facilitate their transmission to future generations.

The sustainable development of any nation is inseparably linked to the preservation of its historical memory, spiritual values, and cultural identity. From the perspective of social philosophy, cultural identity represents an individual's and society's awareness of belonging to a particular cultural community, maintaining historical continuity, and transmitting inherited values across generations. In this context, askiya and qiziqchilik constitute essential components of the cultural identity of the Uzbek people.

Askiya reflects the worldview, ethical principles, linguistic richness, rhetorical culture, and aesthetic ideals of the Uzbek nation. Its sophisticated wordplay, irony, metaphorical language, symbolic expressions, and traditional idioms demonstrate not only exceptional artistic mastery but also the distinctive characteristics of national intellectual culture. Consequently, askiya serves as an effective educational instrument for strengthening respect for the mother tongue, fostering national pride, and preserving historical consciousness among younger generations. Similarly, qiziqchilik portrays various aspects of social life through theatrical performance, providing audiences with opportunities to critically evaluate social relations and individual behavior. Its reliance on humor and

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satire transforms entertainment into a powerful means of social reflection and moral renewal. By encouraging constructive criticism and self-awareness, qiziqchilik contributes to the cultivation of responsible citizenship and ethical public discourse.

The inscription of Askiya on the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2014 confirmed its significance not only as a national cultural treasure but also as a valuable component of the world's cultural heritage. This international recognition has created new opportunities for scholarly research, preservation initiatives, intercultural dialogue, and the global promotion of Uzbek traditional culture. Moreover, it has reinforced the institutional foundations of Uzbekistan's contemporary cultural policy aimed at safeguarding and developing intangible cultural heritage.

One of the principal priorities of New Uzbekistan is the education of young people in the spirit of both national and universal human values. Within this educational framework, askiya and qiziqchilik contribute significantly to the development of a wide range of competencies, including critical and analytical thinking, logical reasoning, public speaking, effective communication, rapid decision-making, tolerance, teamwork, and creative problem-solving. These competencies closely correspond to the skills required for active participation in a democratic civil society and the knowledge-based economy.

Accordingly, integrating elements of askiya and qiziqchilik into university curricula and general education programs—particularly within the disciplines of literature, culture, philosophy, and moral education—would considerably enrich educational practice while strengthening students' cultural awareness and civic responsibility.The rapid advancement of digital technologies has also created unprecedented opportunities for safeguarding intangible cultural heritage. The establishment of digital archives, audiovisual repositories, electronic catalogues, academic databases, virtual museums, and artificial intelligence-based systems for the analysis of oral texts and speech patterns would substantially improve the quality of research and facilitate the preservation of these artistic traditions for future generations. Furthermore, the production of high-quality educational content on digital platforms such as YouTube, podcasts, and other online media can significantly increase young people's interest in traditional performing arts. Nevertheless, while embracing digital innovation, particular attention should be paid to preserving authentic performance practices and preventing the decline in artistic quality that may result from excessive commercialization.

Conclusion

Askiya and qiziqchilik constitute unique manifestations of the centuries-old spiritual experience, aesthetic consciousness, and social philosophy of the Uzbek people. They should be regarded not merely as genres of folklore but as important social institutions that contribute to the strengthening of moral values, the development of critical thinking, the preservation of cultural identity, and the formation of civic consciousness. Under the conditions of New Uzbekistan, the comprehensive study, preservation, digitalization, and international promotion of these traditional art forms will make a substantial contribution to the sustainable development of national culture. At the same time, askiya and qiziqchilik possess considerable potential to enrich intercultural dialogue, promote cultural diversity, and strengthen mutual understanding among peoples in an increasingly globalized world.

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