

Abstract

This work deals with the issues of cultural identity of ethnic groups in the modern Mexican society, explores its characteristics and essence and searches for possibilities of its maintenance. The central question is, which way indigenous groups can develop their culture freely in the modern Mexican society, and so keep their own peculiarity and identity. The main instrument is a case study of Nahua communities occupying the territory of the Northeastern mountain range of the Mexican state of Puebla, which is in the sphere of influence of the organization called Unión de Cooperativas Tosepan Titataniske, seeking to improve the standard of living and strengthen the cultural identity of the villagers in the region.

An ethno-historical study of the Nahua communities living in the particular region, completed with an analysis of the contemporary inhabitants' cultural identity based on a field research, shows that indigenous cultures can keep their identity in spite of significant external interference into their traditional way of life in the course of centuries and that the continuity of their identity is not dependent on maintaining concrete, time conditioned cultural manifestations. On the contrary, important factors for keeping cultural identity are the functional continuity of a given group and its integrity, the existence of common elements of identification, and the society's consciousness of its own difference. The Nahua communities in the region, have kept their identity so far, to a lesser or a greater extent, and they perceive their own peculiarity strongly.

The dissertation has confirmed the original hypothesis, that for keeping cultural identity is necessary the economical sustainability of the given region and its inhabitants, which is the condition for the integrity of particular communities that create the space for a free development of the local culture. In this context, the work explores the influence of the Unión de Cooperativas Tosepan Titataniske that has set as its aim the improvement of the associated villagers' standard of living, especially by means of reaching the economical and ecological sustainability of the region.

The work describes this organization's concrete goals, as presented by its representatives, and it does not only compare them with the real necessities of the Mexican countryside, identified on the basis of secondary literary resources, but, more importantly, it finds out, to which extent these goals are met in practice from the point of view of the recipients themselves.

Apart from secondary literature and internal materials of the organization, the main resources are especially qualitative interviews with the participants of the project; its ideological creators as well as the members of the target group of villagers. The work concludes that the particular organization seeks to solve the majority of the main problems of the region and that its inhabitants perceive a very positive impact of its activities on their lives. By raising the associated villagers' standard of living, the organization supports the integrity of the indigenous communities to a significant extent, reinforcing their cultural identity.