

ISCKMC 2020
International Scientific Congress «KNOWLEDGE, MAN AND CIVILIZATION»
TUNGUS PERCEPT IMAGE IN THE FAR EAST LITERARY
ETHNOGRAPHY

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Abstract

The article reflects Tungus percept images in the Far East literature at the beginning of XX century, which reflected ethnic, political, sociocultural preferences of writers in the perception of the natives in the Far East. The study material was the works published in 1920 –1930, the novel by V.K. Arsenyev “Dersu Uzala” and the story by V. Mart “Dere – a water wedding”. Arsenyev mostly acts as a scientist-ethnographer, recording Tungus traditional mentality in aboriginal culture based on respect of Taiga Law (Free-for-all Law) and following Taiga ethics. A Gold Dersu Uzala perceives other culture via own, saving originality of own world perception despite external historical factors. Arsenyev in this work scrupulously collects scientific facts and combines them in a positivistic sequence according to the stages of expeditions. Venedikt Mart being the master of the pen, when creating Tungus percept image uses formulas of social realism appearing at that time. Ethnographic material, following it or transformation of sacral practices makes a reader understand author’s idea: shows that in socialist construction a former “aborigine” is oriented not at the archaic traditions but modern, “leading” facts of the life, he overcomes ancient limits of the allowed in his life, imposed by religious and cultural taboos, and becomes a competent creator of a new society. The writer perceives the future of the small-numbered peoples of the Far East in dissolving Tungus in the common population of the Soviet Russia according to the official politics of the USSR at that time.

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Keywords: Percept image, literary ethnography, Golds, Tungus



1. Introduction

In the most complete form literary percept images of one ethnos by the other are fulfilled in the literary ethnography – literature which gives scientific development of cultural, religious, psychological patterns, moral code and ethics, household arrangements of the representatives of a certain ethnos living on the geographic area turns into a literary form and is fulfilled in a syncretic combination of scientific and artistic beginnings (Zabiyako et al., 2015).

Tungus perception image in literary ethnography since the beginning of the XX-ieth century is common due to the expansion of borders in Russia (Arsenyev, 2017; Baikov, 1915; Fadeev, 1957; Mart, 1932; Prishvin, 2006; Shkurkin, 1924). Travellers, scientists, officers on special duties and just adventurers made expeditions to the Far East and Northern Manchuria, leaving notes, sketches, dictionaries, memories, letters, which became the basis of literary texts (Zabiyako, 2016).

2. Problem Statement

In XIX – the beginning of XX century Golds were the biggest Tungus-Manchoo ethnic group in the Far East of Russia. This work studies mechanisms of creating a Tungus literary percept image on the example of a Gold-guide Dersu Uzala from the novel by V.K. Arsenyev “Dersu Uzala” and Gold Amba from the story by V. Mart “Dere-water wedding”. The novel “Dersu Uzala” is written by a writer-explorer of the mountain regions in Ussuriland, the result of literary rethinking of the ethnographic expeditions, the second work is a literary fiction based on the materials of the ethnographic studies by the scientists of the early XX century.

3. Research Questions

Tungus percept image in the literary ethnography, typology of image creation in literary ethnography, correlating scientific and literary texts.

4. Purpose of the Study

Basing on the materials of the novel by V. K. Arsenyev “Dersu Uzala” and the story by Venedikt Mart “Dere – water wedding” to study Gold percept image as representatives of the aboriginal Tungus-Manchurian population of the Far East, determine basic typological characteristics of the character, peculiarities of his ethnic-cultural and ethnic-religious consciousness.

5. Research Methods

Cultural-historic, historic-genetic, biography, comparative-typological, and a method of lexical-semantic analysis are used in the work.

6. Findings

Gold percept image in the novel by V.K. Arsenyev “Dersu Uzala” is created from the point of view of perception by autobiographic narrator, who with a guide Dersu Uzala travels in inhospitable taiga Sikhote-Alin. Dersu image and character reflects the features of a real guide Derchu Odzhal, as well as character and behaviour peculiarities of different Tungus-guides, who helped expeditions of V. K. Arsenyev in Primorye in 1910 years. The percept image of the native taiga aborigen is created not via description of the external features, but mostly via speech, behavior, household, religious peculiarities of the Gold.

The author puts an accent on dialogues and monologues of the guide, disclosing via statements his inner world, character features, attitude to people and the world, conditioned by Gold ethnic mentality. The author records the speech of every character of the novel in details, preserving lexical, grammar, and syntactic peculiarities which make the speech unique.

Dersu is a real child of nature: he can listen to the nature, talk with it, and see its signs. Nature answers him in the same way – it protects her son, giving him food and shelter. Arsenyev often noted a special response of the Gold to nature: *“Dersu was sitting opposite me and listening to the night sounds. He understood these sounds, what the stream was murmuring and the wind was whispering to the dry grass”* (Arsenyev, 2017). His home is taiga without roads, but he knows every path, taiga without enterprises and shops, but he has food, clothes, without a house – but for Dersu all the taiga is his big house – *“Thus, – he answered. – My here sits all in all a duck. How can people in a box sit? – He pointed at the ceiling and walls of the room. – People should peak go, shoot”* (Arsenyev, 2017). Dersu watches the world without disturbing or changing it. Taiga aborigines perceive it as home, giving it sacral meaning, for which the world is full of “religious signs and believes” (Zabiyako et al., 2015). Nature for him is anthropomorphic; it is alive, breathing, thinking. Not in vain, the old guide calls natural phenomena, animals, birds, with a common concept – “people”, giving them thinking, feelings and emotions and so on.: *“He said that the state of nature is so that “the fog does not know whether to turn into clouds or disappear”. He said it in his language and called fog “people”. It was as if fog was thinking about turning into rain or waiting a little”* (Arsenyev, 2017).

V. K. Arsenyev often uses the words “aborigen”, “aboriginal” to Dersu and Udekheits, not in derogatory meaning but in the meaning “innate”, stressing their special view of life – naïve, but loyal to life. Naïve world perception allows Dersu loving the world and people; on the other hand people make profit out of his naivety. The story begins with the fact when Dersy was cheated. V.K. Arsenyev underlines that all Tungus are naïve; they are naïve, trust a lot, which helped to become enslaved by the Chinese dealers.

The narrator respects Dersu’s believes, does not laugh, listens to the guide, noting typological similar religious images in Russian and Tungus culture. Tungus perception by the autobiographic narrator, scientist and atheist, who understands the nature of Dersu ethnic and religious consciousness, correlates with Dersu’s perception of the other religion. According to the old believer, Dersu’s soul is “vapor”. This position is unpleasant for the narrator, but not for Dersu. Dersu understands that people around will not understand his believe and will laugh at it, but he continues to believe: *“– There people many, – he started. – Chinese, soldiers... Understand no, will laugh, – disturb”* (Arsenyev, 2017). A

positive attitude of the narrator to Gold and Tungus ethnic world view picture is clearly seen via the correlation of viewpoints of the old believer, the narrator and Dersu.

Kindness for Dersu is extra-ethnic. It is ability to help others, sympathize, and share the last thing and care. He does not distinguish “his” and “others”; he understands everything around as his, despite nationality. Arsenyev calls this behaviour “primitive communism”, admires this feature in the guide: *“This primitive communism permeates all his actions. He shared his hunt equally with all the neighbours despite nationality and left for himself just as much as gave to others”* (Arsenyev, 2017). Dersu perceives this behaviour as something common as a law of life.

The autobiographic narrator does not perceive Dersu as a stranger; he treats him as a friend though calls him an aborigine. Via the perception image of the Gold-guide V.K. Arsenyev not only showed his attitude to Tungus but scrupulously recorded his attitude to the Chinese, Tarian, Udegei, Old Believers. At that period, Tungus were repressed by Chinese, Russians, Koreans, Japanese from their native place of life, but in the novel there is no distinct hatred to other people. *“Dersu remembered days of his childhood when there were no other people except Gold and Udkhe. But then, Chinese appeared, then Russian. Life became harder and harder with every day. Then Koreans came. Forests burnt; sable moved away and other animals became less. And now there are Japanese on the sea shore. How to live further?”* (Arsenyev, 2017). Arsenyev thought about the problem of aborigines’ oppression, he wrote that soon colonization will come to the lands of Udekheits, leaving no virgin taiga to her children, he is indignant that Russian government allows Tarian and Udekheits to be oppressed by Chinese rascals. He tries to calm himself and Dersu down: *“It’s OK, old man, – I answered to him, – there is enough for our life”* (Arsenyev, 2017).

Besides, ethic and religious issues, the novel by Arsenyev touches esthetic issues, united with the Tungus religious world picture (Udekheits, Golds). Dersu himself likes stories, fairy-tales, songs, giving them practical meaning, as appropriate for a primitive mythological world view. For example, Dersu understands in fact the fairy-tale by Pushkin “About a fisherman and a fish”: *“– It is true, this many women exist. – He spitted and continued: – Poor old man, he should have left this woman, would do dugout and roamed to another place”* (Arsenyev, 2017). This understanding of the fairy-tale explains a lot about Dersu and his people perception of the world: Tungus are nomadic tribes, they move a lot, and to migrate to another place is the best solution if they are oppressed by other nations.

Besides basic ethno-cultural features of Tungus percept image in the novel, V.K. Arsenyev pays attention to Tungus religious characteristics (shamanic practices), their physical and psychological features (insensibility to cold, silent nature of women, peculiarities of understanding time and space, love to jewelry and others). V.K. Arsenyev shows Gold consciousness rootedness in the traditional culture of his people, oral folk art. Gold Dersu Uzala perceives other culture via his own, not losing originality of the personal world perception under the influence of the external historic factors.

Another Tungus image perception is given in the story by Venedikt Mart “Dere – a water wedding” (Mart, 1932). When this story was published the author from the Far East lived in Kiev. Though Venedikt Mart was not a scientist-ethnographer, his interest to the people living in the Far East in his creative activity was great (Zabiyako, 2016; Zabiyako et al., 2015). Most his stories are devoted to Chinese, Koreans, Japanese. Before this story he did not pay attention to Golds. Perhaps, his interest to

the culture of the Far Eastern aborigines was caused by his own situation. His Chinese plots were not interesting though he tried to give them social realistic meaning. It was better to keep silent about Japan not to be called a “Japanese spy” as his father. Only indigenous people left – the more, new ideas in the “fact literature” caused authors turn to new meanings in ethno-graphic theme.

In the center of the story there is Gold transitional ritualism, the system of the steadiest ethnic traditions. A rationalist-narrator pays attention to the tiniest details of Gold exotic for Europeans rituals and everyday practices. The scientific bases of literary understanding of Gold image in the literary ethnography by V. Mart were the works by I.A. Lopatin, P.P. SHimkevich and other ethnographers (Lopatin, 1922; Shrenk, 1903; Shimkevich, 1897a, 1897b).

At the start of the story the reader learns that a former poor man came to his native settlement – a Gold Amba, who due to his love to the slating-eyed, high-cheek-boned, blue-haired Gold woman Djabje-Snake makes a long march along the Amur, Sakhalin Island and Kamchatka, which makes him rich: *“furs, rare things in deer-skin bags, glittering things, spirit, two kettles made of pig-iron, Chinese silk...”* (Mart, 1932). The character must give all these belongings to the greedy farther of the beloved girl as bride-money to marry her. During Amba’s absence his beloved was sold to an old, nose-less shaman Foldo-Hole, and soon there will be a final stage of the wedding ceremony – dere.

The choice of the name of the main character is intentional – Amba, that means a “tiger”, and his bride – Djabje, that means a “snake”. Mart, having studied Gold customs, knew that the name choice is determined by the Gold custom to name children by the things that “bring luck, profit to Gold or frighten him” (Shimkevich, 1897a). About the character’s fear of “sacral tigers” the author tells at the beginning of the story, describing accidental meeting of the young Gold and “the master of taiga” when the aborigine *“shook his head quickly bending to the master of taiga. His lips shook murmuring the spell prayers”* (Mart, 1932).

Giving such an important name to his Gold character, the author noted him in the group of tribesmen, predetermining even at the level of name-giving an extraordinary fate, underlining his deep traditional nature and loyalty to the “Law of taiga”, on the other hand denoting his power, superiority over his tribesmen, giving ability to step over age-old customs and choose a new way of life in those historical conditions.

Character’s peculiarity is underlined by the author in that he goes for from his tribe to collect bride-money: for his dream: the slating-eyed, high-cheek-boned, blue-haired Gold woman Djabje-Snake: *“Amba has wandered for several years along the Amur, Sakhalin Island and Kamchatka. <...> put in snow sable traps; hunted a rare blue fox; killed cloddish, whiskered “sea horses” on the ice-caps – seals; hunted black squirrels and a red fox; fished salmon, and huge quinnat”* (Mart, 1932). Thus, the author stresses the importance of the prepared bride-money by Amba and a difficult way that the character went being not afraid to go so far from his tribe. Going so far away from the places where Golds usually hunted, Amba overcomes the age-centuries traditions of his people.

Mart underlines from the very beginning that the character despised the orders of the Tsar Empire which restricted the migration of the small people in the Far East, and isolated these people (Agalarkhanova, 2013). This character is a harbinger of the new policy in the Soviet Russia relating small people of Siberia and the Far East, who got equal rights together with Soviet people after the Soviet

power had come. Mart strengthens this idea by a new perspective for Amba and his wife to work at the collective farm: “...a collective farm needs such strong people as you” (Mart, 1932). The choice of the character is to overcome the age-old traditions, support the policy of the Soviet Russia. This choice at the end of the story brings the character and his bride to the Soviet Civil Registry Office. The author underlines that this is the future of the small people in the Far East – in dissolving Tungus people among the population of the Soviet Russia, which coincides with the official policy of the USSR at that time.

Despite following the traditions of the social realism, Mart remembers that the character is a representative of the aborigine people on the Far-Eastern territories. The author fills the character’s perception image with traditional for little people elements. Traditionalism and firmness of Gold customs are underlined via important elements of Gold ethnic world picture: taiga, river gifts, and this “*secret way in the impassable dark-green kingdom urema (native name of the wild wood)*” (Mart, 1932). Innocence of Gold natural consciousness is in ironical details, for example, perception of the German toothpaste “Khlorodont” by aborigines as a cure-all. A character exchanges it for squirrel skins from a Korean: “*This is a secret, mighty “khlorodont” which even gives new teeth to elderly people*” (Mart, 1932). Totemic nature of the Gold world picture is shown in the episode where Amba meets a sacred tiger, his “dreadful” (Mart, 1932) namesake and the primal forefather according to the Gold legends: “*shook his head quickly bending to the master of taiga*”. *His lips shook murmuring the spell prayers*” (Mart, 1932).

7. Conclusion

In the literary ethnography by V.K. Arsenyev the percept image of Tungus Dersu, fixes common characteristics of the ethnic picture of the world for native Tungus-Manchurian population of the Far East. This picture of the world is based on the respect to the Taiga Law and observing the taiga ethics. Arsenyev in this work shows him as an ethnographer, scrupulously collecting scientific facts and combining them in the positivistic consequence, according to the expeditions. His literary ethnography is in fictionalization of micro-plots of this cumulative chain of events during the travel, in picturesque characteristics and dialogues, in correlation of characters’ points of view. The writer Venedikt Mart creating the Tungus percept image uses the formulas of the appearing social realism. Ethnographic material which is introduced rather filigree meets the author’s idea: to show that a new man – a former “aborigen”, overcomes old-age limits of the allowed, imposed by religion and cultural taboo and becomes a competent creator of the new society.

Acknowledgments

The research has been conducted under the sponsorship of RFFP grant 20-012-00318 “Images of Russia and China in the literary ethnography (according to the materials of Russian and Chinese literature and periodicals in Manchuria in 20–40 years, XX century)”.

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