

## SCTCMG 2019

### International Scientific Conference «Social and Cultural Transformations in the Context of Modern Globalism»

#### GOOD WISH GENRE AS A PART OF KALMYK RITUAL FOLKLORE

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#### *Abstract*

Good wish genre as a part of Kalmyk ritual folklore is under consideration in the present article. Oral pieces documented by the authors on expeditions have been divided into nine groups such as good wishes on child birth, good wishes on wedding, wishes on funeral, good wishes on prominent calendar date, good wishes on hunting and fishing, good wishes on cattle-raising, good wishes on journey, good wishes on erecting a felt house. The suggested classification is determined by situational context of performing a ritual. An inextricable link between a good wish and ritual has been distinguished. Applying a good wish to performing a certain ritual is a part of a complex process of folk culture functioning. Good wishes provided a verbal content of a ritual performance. Over time good wishes underwent altering and redefining. A careful observation and analysis allowed the authors to come to the conclusion that good wishes accompany rituals in the contemporary life of Kalmyks. A strong link between rituals and related good wishes contribute to their conservation for posterity.

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**Keywords:** Folklore, genre, thematic groups, good wishes, rituals.



## 1. Introduction

Studying cultural dimension of ethnic background such as ritual folklore is of a particular interest in Cultural Studies and Linguistics. Original text publication and analysis contribute to a deeper understanding of ancient roots of the contemporary culture. A close attention to ritual folklore enables to trace latent motives of human behavior in the modern world.

Good wishes are pieces of oral poetry recited in order to wish well-being on prominent life events.

## 2. Problem Statement

Rituals as well as ritual folklore has been under consideration of several researchers, travelers, and poetry admirers. Matsakov (1962) is a pioneer in the field of ritual poetry research. Kalmyk child-birth, wedding, travel good wishes can be found in her article “On Kalmyk good wishes” published in 1962.

Monograph “Mystical Kalmyk poetry” by Basangova (2001) pays attention to covers folklore genres that reflect Kalmyk faith in superstitious power of words. Omens, charms, spells, curses, good wishes are paid attention. The good wish genre as a prominent part of oral tradition is paid a particular consideration.

Monograph “Kalmyk wedding ritual poetry” by Habunova published in 1984 and 1998 deals with wedding traditions and related folklore pieces. A detailed classification of wedding good wishes can be found in the book.

Some information on the good wish genre is contained in researches made by Ovalov (1985) in 1985, Omakaeva in 2014, Borlykova in 2014. The mentioned researches concentrate on good wishes’ classification and poetical characteristic features.

## 3. Research Questions

Oral items documented by the authors of the present article on expeditions in Kalmykia are thoroughly studied to be classified according to their thematic field.

## 4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the conveyed research is a comprehensive study of the good wish as a part of ethnic folklore that includes their structure description and content analysis. The above set purpose has not yet been achieved in the existing research papers.

## 5. Research Methods

The theoretical foundations of the research can be found in the works on folklore and ethnography made by A.N.Veselovskiy, V.M.Gatsak, E.M. Meletinskiy, B.N.Putilov, K.V.Chistov, V.K.Sokolova, Yu.G.kruglov, G.G.Gamzatov, S.Yu.Neklyudov, A.S.Kargin, N.A.Alexeev, E.S.Novik, A.K.Baiburin, Bardakhanova (2012), R.A.Sultangareeva, Agapkina (2002), Zorina (2012), B.J.Klaus, V.N.Toporov, S.S.Katasha, G.Ts.Pyurbeev, Kh.Sanpipdendeva, S.Dulama, P.Khorloo, N.O.Sharakshinova, Konguu (2015), N.L.Zhukovskaya, K.N.Yatskovskaya, A.M.Adzhiev, Halimbekova (2014), A.Sh.Kichikova,

M.R.Chalidova, A.M.Gutov, E.N.Kuzmina, Kul'ganek (2010), L.S.Dampilova, Pleshakov (2006), N.Ts.Bitkeev, E.B.Ovalov, E.E.Khabunova, E.P.Bakaeva, B.S.Dugarov, Menyaev (2016) and others.

The structural systematic approach has been applied to the research to classify, compare and contrast the material.

## 6. Findings

Situational context of ritual performing determines classification of good wills. The following groups have been distinguished:

-child-birth good wishes recited in rituals of cutting umbilical cord, hair cutting, gifting guests with clothing items and other presents;

- wedding good wishes recited in rituals of greeting a bride, newly married couple, guests; giving thanks to presents and dowry; praising hospitality, treatment; worshipping a fire;

- funeral wishes recited in sending off a departed soul having remembrance meal;

- good wishes recited on prominent calendar dates such as celebrations of a beginning of spring – Tsagan Sar, New Year coming – Zul, summer coming – Urus Sar;

- good wishes for lucky hunting and fishing;

- cattle raising wishes for offspring;

- farming good wishes for crops;

- journey good wish recited in setting off

- wishes recited in erecting felt houses and choosing location during seasonal migrations;

All rituals were accompanied with good wishes. Different life stages from child birth to passing away were signified with them. Kalmyks believed in word power that could bless them and change a bad luck. A great number of good wishes accompanied child birth. Multi-child families were frequently met that is reflected in a lot of proverbs like “Садга кун – салата модн” (A multi-child man is like a broad-crowned tree).

The autobiographic book written by Sangadzhieva (1988) describes a structure of a child-birth ritual that comprises inviting a midwife “эмгэн”, saying a prayer by a giving birth woman, washing a newly born baby, respecting prohibition in relation to a mother and a baby, taking off a father's hat in case of a boy birth, gifting a midwife with presents, naming a newly born baby. All part of the ritual are accompanied by good wishes.

A good wish for a baby

А, ут наста болтха,

Кииснь акч,

Көлнь шоратж,

Эк-эцкдэн,

Өлзэтэ үрн болж,

Эрүл мөнд өстхэ

Ут наста,

Бат кишгтэ болж,

Let the baby live a long life.

Let the umbilical cord heal up.

Let the foots run on the earth.

Let the parents love their baby.

Let the baby live a happy life .

Let the baby be followed by siblings.

Олн дүүнр

Ард-ардасн дахултха.

One more widely spread group of good wishes is wedding ones. A Kalmyk wedding is a two-fold event where a bridegroom's and bride's parts are distinguished. The former is called "кун болх" (becoming a man) and the latter is regarded as "күүнд одх" (following a man) or "хэрд нарх" (becoming a stranger).

The group comprises a range of good wishes such as: Хэрд нарчах ач күүкэн йөрөлһн (a good wish for a grandchild who is getting married), Көвүн гер авхла тэвдг йөрэл (a good wish for a son recited at a wedding banquet), Ирсн берэн йөрөлһн (a good wish for a daughter-in-law), Худрин өмскүл йөрөлһн (a good wish praising presents gifted by wedding guests), Гер авсн көвүнэ нээрт келсн йөрэл (a good wish recited at a wedding banquet), Күүкн дэрк-махн ирсн цагт тэвдг йөрэл (a good wish praising boiled meat and alcohol brought to a wedding ceremony), Хэрд морджах күүкндэн нерэдсн йөрэл (a good wish for a girl who is getting married), Хүрмд ирсн махна хотын йөрэл (a good wish praising boiled meat brought for a wedding ceremony), Берин чансн цэ йөрөлһн (a good wish praising tea brewed by a bride).

A marriage is called as acquiring a house «геравлһн». An engagement involved several stages. The first visit made by bridegroom's parents is called «зэнг оруулан» (giving a message), «нер бортх» (a first vessel of alcohol). The second visit is called «хойр сав» или «хойр бортх» (two vessels of alcohol). During the third visit three vessels of alcohol as well as a tube of a glue and a piece of silver were brought by bridegroom's parents. A tube of a glue served as a symbol of a strong marriage. A piece of silver was a symbolized wealth. A bridegroom joined his parents during the fourth visit. The fifth visit involved preparing a bride's dowry "хулд ишклһн".

A good wish for a son praising his desire to get married

Не, мана гер авчах көвүн	I praise my son's desire to get married.
Амулц сэн өрк тогтаж,	I wish you to have a good family,
Олн үрдүдтэ болж,	I wish you have many children,
Аав-ээжиннь нер дуудулж,	I wish you to be proud of your parents,
Бат өрк-бүлтэ болж	I wish you a strong family,
Байрта-бахта жирһк болтха!	I wish you happiness and well-being.

Renaming a daughter was also a compulsory part of a wedding ceremony. It was called "нер сольх". Besides renaming, a change of style of wearing and hair-do took place. The ritual of renaming is met at contemporary wedding ceremonies. The following examples have been found: Tsagan into Tevkya (a 90 year old woman), Bova into Tsagan (a 80 year old woman), Raya into Bulgun (a 65 year old woman), Valya into Tsagan (a 65 year old woman), Katya into Bova (a 48 year old woman), Dusya into Tsagan (a 50 year old woman), Nadya into Kishtya (a 42 year old woman), Inna into Dzhirgal (a 35 year old woman), Oxana into Namdzhil (a 25 year old woman), Danara into Tevkya (a 25 year old woman), Altana into Amulanga (a 25 year old woman). Harmonious names are often chosen. The name "Tsagan" meaning "white" is the most frequently met as white is considered to be a symbol of happiness ("кишг").

A good wish for a daughter-in law at ritual of renaming

Цаһансаната,	Let the daughter-in-law have bright ideas and kind heart
Цаһанседклтә,	Let the daughter-in-law live a long and happy life
Ут наста,	Let the daughter-in-law have
Бат кишгтә,	Let the daughter-in-law have many children
Олнкүүкдтә	
Бер бол.	

Funeral rituals are consistent with Kalmyk ideas about life after death. The aim of funeral rituals was to ease a way to the world beyond. Recited wishes asked the deceased to have happiness at home. It was considered to be a good sign to die on “matsg” days – on the eight, on the fifteenth dates of a month and on a date of a new moon. To die on Saturday was considered to be a bad sign.

Good wishes were also recited on prominent calendar dates such as celebrations of a beginning of spring – Tsagan Sar, New Year coming – Zul, summer coming – Urus Sar. Their aim was to protect a family from bad luck and diseases call on happiness. Observing rituals and reciting good wishes on prominent calendar dates reflected Style of Kalmyk household and husbandry.

A beginning of spring – Tsagan Sar – symbolizes the end of wintering. Usual celebration included treating guests and demonstrating a respectful attitude towards elderly people. Kalmyks believed that a proper ritual observation contributed to good luck. Overcoming winter obstacles were called “жилән дааһад һарсн”, an end of wintering was called “үвләс мөнд һарсн”. Tsagan Sar good wishes embrace all parts of celebration: giving offerings, saying prayers for well-being, demonstrating a respectful attitude towards elderly people.

Cattle raising good wishes for offspring was a part of Kalmyk lives. They addressed a cattle owner, his family and his cattle consisting of four types of animals.

A cattle raising good wish

Let all the cattle be numerous,  
Let the offspring be rich,  
Let the cattle give much milk and butter,  
Let the sheep give much wool,  
Let the owner and his family live a healthy, wealthy and long life.

The observation and analysis have allowed the authors to come to the conclusion that good wishes accompany rituals in the contemporary life of kalmyks. A strong link between rituals and related good wishes contribute to their conservation for posterity.

The further research is to be devoted to describing peculiarities of good wish reciting as well as their comparative study. The conveyed research contributes to a deeper understanding ancient origins of contemporary Kalmyk lifestyle.

## 7. Conclusion

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## Acknowledgments

The research is financially supported by Kalmyk state university named under B.B. Gorodovikov through a research project № 1099 “Good wishes of Mongolian peoples: traditional and contemporary usage (on the basis of expedition materials)”.

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