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REPRESENTATION OF FOLKLORE TRADITIONS IN MODERN KALMYK LITERATURE

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Abstract

Folklore traditions played a key role in spiritual development of the Kalmyk people and served the fertile ground for the national fiction. Due to ethnic changes many genres of Kalmyk folklore were lost in the era of globalization, however some examples of small oral poetic genres: *йөрәлмүд* (wishful thinking), *магталмүд* (praises), *үлгүрмүд* (proverbs), etc. are important for modern society since they preserve the national identity of the Kalmyks. It shall be noted that the use of aphoristic expressions representing reminiscence of Kalmyk national wishful thinking is one of the popular traditions in modern Kalmyk fiction. Thus, wishful thinking along with other small folklore genres is organically embedded into a compositional literature complex. They perform various functions: characterize a hero, are used at the beginning of a plot, a narration, at the end of some of its parts, express the emotional state of characters. In their figurative system they reflect the originality of material and spiritual culture of the nation at different stages of historical development. It is clear that throughout its long period of existence the genre of wishful thinking of the Kalmyks did not lose its informative, social, esthetic and educational value. Further comprehensive study of the aphoristic poetry of the Kalmyks in comparison with works of other Mongolian people seems quite relevant. The methodology of the study includes system analysis, use of data from modern domestic and foreign historiography, study of world literary criticism and achievements of western representatives of historical and philological school and Russian scientists.

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Keywords: Mongolian, Kalmyk literature, folklore traditions, small genres, wishful thinking.



1. Introduction

The Mongols have the richest folklore and literature rooted in the deep historical past consisting of unique monuments, historical chronicles, epos, fairy tales, legends, stories, songs and traditional works. The following are the examples of incorruptible monuments of epic poetry: Jangar, Geser, Erensey, Bum-Erdeni, etc. which became the national encyclopedia of Mongolian people. Being passed down for generations the epic poetry expressed the human belief in ideals of good and wellbeing. The epos storytellers (narrators and improvisers) at all times were and still are the carriers and communicators of this invaluable heritage strictly following the canons and reproducing texts in line with traditions (Bitkeev & Bitkeeva, 2012).

Folklore traditions played a key role in spiritual development of the Kalmyk people and served the fertile ground for the national fiction. Historical and literary monuments of pre-revolutionary Kalmyk literature, the heroic epos *Jangar* and examples of oral and poetic arts were preserved due to national Todo Bichig script (“clear writing”) and included into the national treasury of modern Kalmyk literature thus significantly enriching the literature of different nations. Due to ethnic changes many genres of Kalmyk folklore were lost in the era of globalization, however some examples of small oral poetic genres, such as *ахр* and *ут дун* (traditional and national songs), *йөрэлмүд* (wishful thinking), *магталмүд* (praises), *үлгүрмүд* (proverbs), *цечн үгмүд* (sayings), etc. are important for modern society since they preserve the national identity of the Kalmyks.

2. Problem Statement

The examples of oral poetic art are widespread in many genres of Mongolian literature and in this regard its entire scope presents a particular interest to researchers. The Mongolian Manuscript Collection of the St. Petersburg Branch of the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences contains the biggest collection of manuscripts of Mongolian poetic folklore in the world outside Mongolia that accounts for over 8000 items. Initially, the written heritage of Mongolian people has been collected in the Mongolian Manuscript Collection of the St. Petersburg Branch of the Institute of Oriental Studies since the first manuscripts received from the ruins of the Ablay-Khiid Monastery up to the end of the 19th century. The next period included well-targeted acquisition of the most valuable and rare manuscripts, wood-engravers and lithographs by specialists in Mongolian studies such as K.F. Golstunsky, A.M. Pozdneev, C.Zh. Zhamtsarano, B.Ya. Vladimirtsov, A.V. Burdukov, B.I. Pankratov, etc. (as cited in Kulganek, 2008).

Today the specialists in Mongolian studies are united by the same traditions and cannot exist without the complex study of history, culture, literature and language of nomadic people. Among them there is a number of works of foreign researchers devoted to folklore genres of the Mongolian people within spiritual and cultural, ethnic and historical conditionality (Krueger, 1961, 1966; Kara, 1966, 1970, 2000; Poppe, 1975a, 1975b; Lorincz, 1982; Lord, 1965, 1986, 1987; Haltod, 1966; Taube, 1972, 1983; Bawden, 1982). The above studies cover the problems of syncretism of genres, clarify the real basis of ritual texts, establish typological similarity between shaman and Buddhist texts, identify the role of Buddhist formulas and concepts of ceremonial texts, preserve folklore traditions and their continuity (Sanzheeva, 2011).

The Mongolian studies reflect various specific features of oral and poetic art of Mongolian people in the context of global folklore (S.A. Kozin, S.Yu. Neklyudov, N.O. Sharakshinova, P.M. Khomonov, G.I. Mikhaylov, L.K. Gerasimovich, A.D. Tsendina, L.G. Skorodumova, N.C. Bitkeev, E.E. Khabunova, T.G. Bordzhanova, S.Sh. Chagdurov, C. Damdinsuren, B. Rinchen, A. Alim, B. Katu and many others).

3. Research Questions

A specific genre – wishful thinking that is characterized by the laconicism of national poetic language, elegance of its form and selectivity of artistic device – holds a special place in folklore arts of Mongolian and Central Asian people. Wishful thinking performs critical communicative and regulatory function in the culture of different people of the world, but for Mongolian people wishful thinking makes a peculiar genre of ceremonial poetry, which is equally called *epθθλ* in Mongol language; *üθpθλ* in Kalmyk language (from a verb *epθθ* – “to bless, wish well, welcome”) (Omakaeva & Borlykova, 2014).

The yoral wishful thinking is connected with different events of the nomads and is usually pronounced in the event of birth, wedding, new yurt, migrating, sheep shearing, fitting of new clothes, etc. The internal form of a phrase “wishful thinking” is the expression of kind thoughts and good wishes: “A wish of well-being to another person – favorable moral demonstration” (Formanovskaya, 2011, p.52). Besides its main function, yorals also bear additional meaning realized depending on different events and occasions. The Kalmyk wishful thinking has strict composition and, as a rule, sounds in the context of certain ceremonies and rituals in line with traditional canons. It was believed that the non-compliance with these principles may destruct the sacral meaning of a ritual and decrease the magic influence of a word.

The works of many Kalmyk scientists are devoted to genre specifics and poetic features of wishful thinking (Ochirov 1909; Matsakov 1962; Basangova, 2007; Sarangov, 2012, etc.). Folklore and linguocultural traditions of wishful thinking in the heroic epos *Jangar* and works of Kalmyk poets and prose writers were considered by (Ochirova, 2011).

4. Purpose of the Study

To understand the idioethnic specifics and originality of the narrative heritage of the Oyrat-Kalmyks the modern Kalmyk literature considers historical and cultural development of Mongolian people and problems of their folklore traditions thus satisfying the purpose of the given study. “The history of national literature is mainly based on the recognition of dialectic unity of national and interethnic historical and literary processes once it considers the general literary and historical conformities and at the same time defines the regularities of the corresponding national literature or group of literatures on the basis of the specifics of certain writers and works” (Flaker, 1968, p. 99).

It is impossible to develop the history and culture of the nation without continuity of generations and productive adoption of spiritual values created by predecessors. One of the typical features of the Kalmyk fiction is the use of aphoristic genres of folklore, traditional forms and approaches.

5. Research Methods

The methodology of the study includes system analysis, use of data from modern domestic and foreign historiography, study of world literary criticism and achievements of western representatives of historical and philological school (M. Müller, J. Grimm), as well as Russian scientists (F.I. Buslaev, A.N. Afanasyev, A.N. Veselovsky). To understand the idioethnic specifics and originality of the narrative heritage of the Oyrat-Kalmyks the study considers cross-cultural local traditions, methods of interpretation of traditional texts, as well as formal and logical tools.

6. Findings

Kalmyk poets and writers have never considered traditional poetic forms that have been developed in folklore through centuries since they treated them as an obsolete antiquity. In their creative practice they used the entire variety of valuable folklore traditions. Folklore traditions served a fundamental principle of art consciousness and a real school of creative writing thus allowing poets reproducing and generalizing certain features of the Kalmyk national character.

Thus, in the poem *Йөрэл шиңгертхэ* (“Let the yoral be”) Kalyaev (1968) successfully used stable forms of the traditional yoral: *Жирһлин жқолад күргесн / Живртэ мана баһчуд, / Байрин көтлвр болгесн / Бамба Зула цецгүд / Байсхлта өдрин өлзэд, / Балһсн, салэдин аһуд: / Күцсн хамгтн күцтхэ, / Күлэсн иньгтн иртхэ.*

In his poem a poet kept all features typical for national yorals: fluency, expression of figuratively graphic words, softness of intonation. A typical example of this genre in modern Kalmyk poetry, which reflects the entire scope of a folklore word, is *The Kalmyk Wishful Thinking (Хальмг йөрэлмүд)* by Erendzhenov (1969). In one of his poems *Wishful Thinking to New Year (Шин жилин йөрэл)* the poet addresses all people wishing them wealth, happiness, safe winter, rich crop, serene old age, vigorous life in young years: *Аав, ээжһнр, аһнр, / Алтн болсн ачһнр, / Мини Төрскни тосхачһнр, / Межэ манаһч цергчһнр, / Кеер йовдг хөөчһнр, / Колхоз, совхозин малчһнр, / Ирх шин жилмүдтн / Идэһэрн байн болтха, / Колхоз, совхозин малтн / Көдэһэр дүүрж өстхэ!* (Erendzhenov, 1969, p. 83).

The author poeticizes the surrounding world and natural phenomenon through traditional means of the national poetry. In general, brevity, proximity to traditional texts is typical for Erendzhenov (1969). His wishful thinking poems were addressed to contemporaries, but in fact they are very closely connected with the richest centuries-old traditions of national yorals and created under their influence.

In many yorals of *Wishful Thinking of Modern Times (Шин цагин йөрэлмүд)* by Baydyev (1967), *Wishful Thinking to Young People (Баһчудын йөрэл)* by Erendzhenov (1969), *Wishful Thinking to the Opening of Kalmyk University (Хальмг университет секһин)* by E. Erendzhenov the authors inevitably refer to real facts and events typical for the national history and public life. Besides, the authors show a peculiar form of thinking and behavior – the entire public and psychological complex of national feelings, ethical features. *Кезэн кергт болвчн / Келсндэн бат болж, / Кесндэн һавц болж, / Эвин жирһл делдий, / Элвг эдл-уушар / Эңкр Төрскэн теткий!* (Baydyev, 1967). In this poem *Wishful Thinking to Cattle Breeders (Малчһрин йөрэл)* Baydyev (1967) urges all people to work so that they can turn “our ancient land, the Kalmyk land into a prosperous territory”.

Thus, the writers often use similar traditional forms of a yoral, such as *Wishful thinking to the house*, *Wishful thinking in honor of a wedding*, *Wishful thinking to the daughter-in-law*, *Wishful thinking to food*, *Wishful thinking to koumiss*, *Wishful thinking to new clothes*, *Wishful thinking in honor of a child's birth*, etc.

The writers following the traditions and thus creating their own masterpieces are attracted to this feature of a genre. Remaining in general within a canon, wishful thinking is often exposed to changes of its form and content, especially regarding the main idea (Ochirova, 2011).

7. Conclusion

Thus, folklore traditions found their imaginative application in modern Kalmyk literature. Addressing to oral poetry of their people Kalmyk writers did not disregard one of the most ancient and widespread genres – the yoral. At present the wishful thinking is not lost, it continues to develop, only their content but not the form is changed. The writers of new wishful thinking rely on traditional forms and richness of content of previous masterpieces.

The study of modern Kalmyk literature in the interaction with folklore traditions allows concluding that even today the communion to living springs of folklore is a remarkable and rewarding process for authors. The digestion of wealth and experience of artistic endeavors of the nation is the primary task of each writer.

The works of many Kalmyk poets and writers confirm that along with new genres the traditional folklore genres can function productively at different stages of development of the written literature: a poet can always find yet unused resources to reflect a new vital content.

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