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## FOLKLORE AND DIALECT IN “AND QUIET FLOWS THE DON”

BY M. SHOLOKHOV

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### *Abstract*

The paper describes a comprehensive study of folklore and dialect of the epic novel *And Quiet Flows the Don* by M. A. Sholokhov based on a combination of linguistic and folkloristic approaches regarding the study of folklore inclusions, their linguistic, genre and style specific nature in particular piece of writing. The author's appeal to folk demonology can be traced in the transmission of human rumors about a Turkish woman, a comic story about the search for treasure of Christonya the linguistic identity of which is determined by dialect vocabulary. Military spell, called prayers in the novel *And Quiet Flows the Don*, demonstrate a mixture of Christian beliefs and folklore, fulfil a sacred protective function, and embody the desire to be invulnerable in the face of danger. Dialecticisms in their poetic structure create a local flavor, emphasizing the local nature of the novel, the prevalence among the Don Cossacks. A song folklore, reflecting dialectical features at the phonetic, lexical, word-formation levels, performs various functions in the Sholokhov epic novel i.e. portends future events of the plot, responds to changes in the fate of the people, expresses moods and feelings, unites heroes, affirms and preserves eternal values. Poetic symbolism of the folk lyrics is created with the help of dialectisms. The moral world of Russian folklore, in its linguistic identity, refracted in the author's consciousness of the writer, determined the features of the image of the people's fate at a turning point in history.

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**Keywords:** Folklore, dialect context, epic novel, Sholokhov, Quietly Flows the Don.



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## **1. Introduction**

Folklore and dialectal features in the epic novel *And Quiet Flows the Don* by M.A. Sholokhov often attracted the attention of philologists. The image of traditional folk culture, its value world reflected in the work became the subject of research interest of Protsenko (2003), Arkhipenko, Vlaskina, Vlaskina (2010), Satarova (2002). Identification of the folklore sources of character images (Kolchev, 2001), the study of song folklore (Tumilevich, 1990; Zheltova, 2004), military conspiracies (Bobrov, 2012, Korovashko, 2009, Toporkov, 2016), in the artistic structure of the epic novel the proverb and idiomatic formations (Stolbunova, 2004) develop a special direction of understanding the writing in the context of folk tradition. Dialectisms and methods of their inclusion in the text are also considered in detail in the works of Ryashentsev (1950), Koltakov (1961), Okhalina (2013). In 2005, due to the 100th anniversary of Sholokhov, the Dictionary of Mikhail Sholokhov's Language (Dibrova, 2005) was published, which is the most complete lexicographic description of the language of the writer and encourages further commenting on its usage. The combination of linguistic and folklore approaches in studying the role of folklore inclusions, determining their linguistic, genre and style specific nature in Sholokhov's epic novel *And Quiet Flows the Don*, which make up the folklore and dialect context of the work, will contribute to deeper understanding of the nature of the artistic word and comprehend the diversity of poetics of Sholokhov's text.

## **2. Problem Statement**

This paper is devoted to the study of the problem of folklore and dialect influence on the artistic world of Sholokhov's work *And Quiet Flows the Don*. This novel remains topical due to the priorities of modern literary criticism, addressing the spiritual, folk and poetic sources of Russian literature, as well as the need to consider specific manifestations of literary folklore taking into account the achievements of linguistic folkloristics (Khrolenko, 1974) as an integrative relatively young field of philological study.

## **3. Research Questions**

The subject of the study is the folklore writings that differ in dialectical features or are included in the artistic essence of the epic novel *And Quiet Flows the Don* by M. A. Sholokhov through ritual and dialect vocabulary. An address to the folklore and dialect component in a specific author's interpretation will clarify the idea of the writer's folklore, his literary and aesthetic views.

## **4. Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the work is to study the folklore and dialect context of the epic novel *And Quiet Flows the Don* by M. A. Sholokhov.

## **5. Research Methods**

The descriptive and analytical, contextual and logical, comparative and typological, as well as systematic and structural methods found their application in this piece of writing.

## 6. Findings

The folklore in the epic novel *And Quiet Flows the Don* by Sholokhov (1980) is represented by various genres. The author creatively masters the song, aphoristic, and magical folklore. The writer's attention to the folk fiction can be seen from the first pages of the writing. The farmers were very harsh with the Turkish woman, Prokofiy Melekhov's wife, accusing her of being a witch. The word-formation dialectic, which indicates the harmful actions of people associated with the evil spirits is confirmed by the neighbor's story

The daughter-in-law of the Astakhovs <...> swore as if on the second day of the Trinity, before the light appeared, she saw how Prokofiev's wife, fair-haired and barefoot, milked a cow in their shed. Since then, the cow's udder has dried up and turned into a baby's fist, beat off milk and soon died out. (Sholokhov, 1980, p. 93)

The reliance on the authenticity, which obeys folklore narratives about a meeting with a supernatural being (tales, true stories), can be traced in the appeal to the authority of God (swear/swore), identification of time (on the second day of the Trinity, before the light) and the scene using lexical dialecticism like "shed" meaning farmyard. According to popular beliefs, witches milk cows at night and drain animals (Balov, 1901; Zabylin, 2014). It was this idea that became the source of slander and the tragic fate of an innocent Turkish woman.

Folk beliefs about treasures were also reflected in Sholokhov's epic novel. Following the camp gathering place, Cossack farmers stop spending the night near the mound. The Cossack, nicknamed Christonya, gathered around the fire and told how he was looking for treasure "So, my Dad says: Come on, Christian, we'll dig out Merkulov Kurgan". He heard from his grandfather that there was a buried treasure there. And the treasure, therefore, cannot be taken by anyone. Dad promised the God: If you give, they say, a treasure I will build a beautiful church. So, we decided and went there. The earth "stanichnaya" – the doubt could come only from the chieftain. We arrived at night. We waited until it became dark, the mare, therefore, was hobbled, and then we climbed to the top with the shovels. We dug about two-arshin pit: the earth was hard and purely stone. I ran with sweat. Dad whispered the prayers, but I, brothers, had stomach growling ... In the summertime, the grubo you know, i.e. sour milk and kvass ... It would cross your stomach, death in your eyes, and that's it! The deceased father, God rest his soul, says "Christian, you are bastard! I am saying grace but you cannot restrain food and breathe. Go, he says, go down the mound, otherwise I'd cut your head off with a shovel. The treasure can go into the ground through you, bastard. I laid down under the mound and suffered from stomachache, and the dead man was healthy, damn it! He continued digging by himself. And he reached the stone plate. He called me. I, therefore, raised this plate ... Believe me, brothers, there was a moonlight night and it was shining under the plate ..." (Sholokhov, 1980). The folk fantasy distinguishes between buried treasures of two kinds, i.e. hidden with and without any spell. The greatest effort is required to get the one which has a spell on. As Balov (1901) noted,

It is much more difficult to get the "cursed" treasure because you need to know which curse is on the treasure. Some treasures have such a curse or spell that only those who shed human blood, etc., can receive the treasure. To pull out an earthen treasure without knowing the spell is a waste of time. They can hardly reach a treasure and it again plunges into the ground, etc. (p. 19)

The genres of fabulous prose record various attempts of getting treasure, which finally failed. Creating a noise, the treasure of a tailor who did not obey the healer “chuvashenin” and had some thoughts about having no will to share the found good with the worker. With a thunder and crash, the “boat with the treasury” fell under the ground because of Cossack greed (Azbeleva, 1992). The explanation of Sholokhov’s Christonya that the treasure is not given to everyone’s hands refers to the folk stories “Buried Money”, “Treasure with the Dead Man’s Hands”. Their heroes, inheriting the wealth of stingy relatives, are quick-witted and, tearing off the treasure with the hands of the deceased, they fulfil necessary condition “The hands that bury those hands will dig up!” (Azbeleva, 1992). As we see, the folklore works inspire the idea that the worthy, endowed with kindness, courage and quick wit, is able to possess a treasure. The father of Christonya strives to be among them, promising to be grateful and generous, if successful, to build a “church”. Passing the promises of the unlucky treasure hunter, the author of *And Quiet Flows the Don* uses morphological dialectism typical for South Russian dialects, when the noun of the 3rd declensions under the influence of the analogy law begins to change as a noun of the 1st declension. The incorrect character’s speech correlates with the vain dream of easily gaining wealth. The phonetic dialecticism expressed in the novel denotes the ataman’s alleged attitude to the situation of treasure hunting and refers to Christonya’s previously expressed fears “Do you think the ataman will strike us without the permission to conceive the mound?” (Sholokhov, 1980). The lexical dialectic strike, i.e. take into custody, detain someone (Filin, 1972), expresses the narrator’s alarming mood. Secret actions of the heroes are performed at night, which is determined with the lexical dialectic “pokel” used in the meaning “for the time being” (Gubarev, 1968) together with the verb “will darken”. Dialect vocabulary makes it possible to recreate the process of digging up the mound with the word-forming dialecticism “conceived”, i.e. started. The intensity of the action is evidenced by the lexical dialectic “buzovat”, i.e. “to work quickly, to work hard” (Filin, 1968). It is noteworthy that having embarked on the path of the unknown, the temptation of enrichment, not excluding the connection with the evil spirits in finding treasure, the hero’s father seeks to reinforce his efforts with prayer. The combination of pagan and Orthodox in the worldview of Sholokhov’s character reflects the paradoxes of popular consciousness. The comic element of the story, caused by the summer grub, is created using various dialectisms, i.e. phonetic “zvestny” (famous), morphological “moget”, “can”, and phraseological typical for Russian Don dialects. The culmination of treasure hunting, i.e. the raising of a stone plate and discovering something brilliant, is made out with the help of word-formation dialectic “podovzvel”, meaning pick up. At an intriguing moment, the story is interrupted. The impatient Petro accuses Christonya of lying, to which he responds with the phraseological dialectic “go to teterya-yaterya” and assures the authenticity of what is happening. The ending of the story, unexpected and natural, reveals the find. It turned out to be “burnt coal,” “about forty,” which the hero raked until the morning “I threw, threw this “stramota” (meaning shame), until the light of day” (Sholokhov, 1980). The morphological dialecticisms “burned”, “this stramota” convey the attitude of Christonya to the found, denote deceived hopes. A similar outcome of the attempt to gain wealth is found in the former “Coals instead of gold” recorded in the Chita region. The gold collected in the bag, which crumbled from a blow, the werewolf treasure, which took the form of a little girl, turns into coal (Zinoviev, 1987). However, even such “wealth” escapes from the Sholokhov’s treasure hunters, the ataman appears in the morning and takes

them to the village. So, the idea of inaccessibility of the treasure is affirmed, and the heroes join the ranks of those in whose hands it is not given, dooming themselves to retribution for the daring dream of gaining unearned wealth.

The spell as a special genre of magic folklore is also included in the artistic content of Sholokhov's writing. Having understood the impossibility of happiness with Gregory, Aksinya goes for help to a grandmother Drozdikha. At dawn they go to the Don to get rid of longing. The plot is preceded by ritual acts. Using phonetic dialecticism, the healer orders Aksinya to "cross herself looking to the East". The text of the spell is not completely given in the writing "The keys are frozen, fluid from the bottom ... Combustible flesh ... A beast in the heart ... Anxiety... And the holy cross ... the most holy, holy ... Servant of God Gregory ... – it was wafted the ears of Aksinya" (Sholokhov, 1980). The nature is adjacent to Christian symbols and images, pagan and Orthodox traditions are combined. Rituals are based on the special meaning of water and salt. Being a source of renewal and purification, water should carry away human longing, because the "grandmother" whispers a plot standing by the Don. A person's attachment to bread and salt was compared with the power of love "Drozdikha sprinkled salt on a wet sandy placer under her feet, poured into the water, and the remains put into Aksinya's bosom" (Sholokhov, 1980). Parting with Aksinya, the healer says "Come, dear, pozoryui", which in the Don area had a meaning "to have dinner or breakfast" (Filin, 1968). The folk magic is called upon to facilitate the return of man to the familiar atmosphere.

Military conspiracies in the piece of writing *And Quiet Flows the Don* are motivated by the plot. The heroes of the epic novel call them prayers, following the oral and manuscript traditions of the beginning of the 20th century. Going to the First World War, the Cossacks stop for a night at one grandfather's place, a participant in the Russian-Turkish war, who allows them to write off a prayer. It will help to save their lives." On a sheet, which turned brown because of age there were several prayers, they were written based on choice "who likes what." The Cossacks will carry this text with them, believing in the protective function of the written amulet. The first is the "Prayer protecting from a gun shot" designed to protect against enemy arrows and bullets. The poetic structure of the spell, as noted by Toporkov (2016), consists of 7 formulas. Among them 3 "Like a hammer comes off kovadlo, so would a bullet detach from me" (Sholokhov, 1980) is of particular interest from the point of view of a dialect vocabulary. The word "kovadlo" is characteristic of the dialect of the Don Cossacks and has the meaning of "anvil". Its inherent strength is likened to the warrior's desired invulnerability.

The second "Prayer from the battle" has a three-part structure. The opening image of the "stone husband", as established by Toporkov (2016), finds parallels in other military spells. In the main part, a motive for invulnerability of a warrior develops, endowing him with stone clothing that obscures "from enemy weapons, from feathered arrows, from foreign ethnic opponents" (Toporkov, 2016). The enumeration of all kinds of combat threats begins with a saber characterized by phonetic dialecticism as "vostry" and ends with a Kalmyk foe. The consummation ends with the traditional prayer appeal "Holy Fathers and heavenly powers, keep me, servant of God. Amen" (Sholokhov, 1980).

. The third text "Prayer during the raid" is aimed at preserving the life of a warrior during offensive operations. The request for patronage is addressed to the Holy Mother of God, Jesus Christ and the Holy Great Martyr Dmitry Solunsky. In the spell, there are word-building dialecticisms, among which

are the following: “uschiti”, “posirochennyi” corresponding to the image of a destitute, mourning person in need of protection. The adjective “drevokolkova” used together with the word “arrow” goes back to the lexical derivational dialectism of “woodcutters” applicable to “solid as a tree, object” (Large Explanatory Dictionary of the Don Cossacks, 2003). Equal in strength to wood, an arrow, due to the influence of speech magic, should go around the fighter and return to the forest as “a feather to his mother bird, and glue to a fish” (Sholokhov, 1980). Going back to various folklore works, spells in Sholokhov’s epic novel correspond to the sacred function of the primary sources, inherit their structure, reflect their linguistic identity, making it possible to talk about imitating the authenticity of the text as a specific author’s attitude. The dialect vocabulary, which traditionally creates local flavor, makes it possible to demonstrate that the military spells in the *And Quiet Flows the Don* are peculiar to the Don Cossacks, contrasting them with the works of all-Russian folklore.

A folk song as an expression of the inner strength, beauty, goodness and truth is the most important element of the artistic structure of the epic novel by Sholokhov. The lines of ancient Cossack songs serve as an epigraph to the work, conveying the unity of man and nature and the complexity of life of the military Don class. The song accompanies Sholokhov’s heroes throughout their entire life path, starting from their birth. Daria quietly sings a lullaby to a waking baby Daria “Koloda -duda, // Ide zh ty byla? // – Koney stegla // – Chego vysteregla? // – Konya s sedlom, // S zolotym makhrom ... <...> – A ide zh tvoy kon? // – Za vorotami stoit, // – A ide zh vorota? // – Voda unesla” (Sholokhov, 1980). The folklore work is built in the form of a dialogue, starting with an appeal to the “koloda-duda,” according to Arsenyev, Tkachenko, and Kagakov (2018), which is a well with a log house. The phonetic dialectic “ide”, repeated 7 times in the fragment of a song used by the writer, is involved in creating a special melody inducing a dream. The song text is superimposed on the events occurring with the heroes of Sholokhov. “Tomorrow Petr will go to the camps,” recalls Gregory. This song portends the difficult fate of people, who find themselves in a turbulent whirlpool of historical turmoil of the 20th century.

The singing gift unites Gregory and Aksinya. The lexical dialectic “dishkanit” in the meaning of “singing in a high voice, lead the part of the echo in the choir, sing along” expresses the nature of their abilities. “Oh, Grishka is your dishkanit! Voice like a pure thread of silver,” said Stepan Astakhov. The reconciled Astakhovs sing as in the first years of their married life “Stepan started his military song. Aksinya dishkanila with a full voice” (Sholokhov, 1980). The Don dialectic “play” in the meaning of “sing” is used more than once by the author. “Come on, Ksyusha, let’s play a song.” Stepan addresses his wife “I was a long time ago when played as a young boy, and now my voice has dried up and my life has been cut off. I’m going to see a stranger’s wife with no place to live like a wimp wolf ...,” says Grigory, when hearing the familiar words of an old Cossack song.

Features of the dialect at the level of phonetics can be traced in the songs “Ekh ty, zorenka-zarnitsa ...” and “Ne sadisy voszle menya” performed by the Cossacks on the way to the camp. The phonetic dialecticism “svovo” is found in verse 6 of the first song, which was called the “servant” and introduced into the literary text by the couplets interrupted by the author’s characteristics of peculiarities of its choral performance, irresistible effect on everyone: ... “Ekh ty, zorenka-zarnitsa, // Rano na nebo vzoshla...// Molodaya, vot ona, babenka // Pozdno po vodu poshla... // A mal’chishka, on dogadalsya, // Stal konya svovo sedlat... // Osedlal konya gnedogo – // Stal babenku dogonyat’... // Ty pozvol, pozvol, babenka, //

Konya v rechke napoit...»” (Sholokhov, 1980). The song plot reveals a parallel in the realities of life of the heroes of Sholokhov, i.e. Aksinya, in the absence of her husband, responded to the courtship of the “boy” – Grigory Melekhov. The text of the second song, lovingly humorous, full of youthful enthusiasm, is presented in the fragments and completed with the phonetic and derivational dialectic “lyublyu syna knyazevskogo” (Sholokhov, 1980).

The folk song expresses the mood of the Cossacks in the third year of the First World War, when “the sun was facing the oak”. The phraseologism of the Don dialects, meaning “the position of the sun over the horizon at the sunrise or sunset”, testifies to the decision to end the war that has matured among the people. The protest against the tsarist enslavement in the song recalls the freedom-loving pages of Russian history, Emelyan Pugachev, the leader of the Cossack-peasant uprising, which stirred up the whole of Russia “Ekh vy, gorki khlopoty, // Tesny tsarski khomuty! // Kazachenkam vyi trut – // Ni vzdokhnut, ni vzdokhnut. // Pugachev po Donu klichet, // Po nizovyam goli zychet! // “Atamany, kazaki!..” (Sholokhov, 1980). The image of Pugachev is revealed with the help of dialect vocabulary, i.e. zychet meaning to scream. The severity of royal oppression is emphasized by epy refrain with the use of phonetic dialecticism “to breathe.” Longing for home, for peaceful life, left to the blinds, as they were called in the Don dialects, “the wives of the Cossacks who left for military service” poses a threat “A tsaryu... poludim, // Oy, syp! Oy, zhgi!.. // U-ukh! Ukh! Ukh! Kha!.. // Kha-kha-khi-kho-khu-kha-kha!” (Sholokhov, 1980). The lexical dialectic poludit, that is, “beat anyone” (Filin, 1981), makes it possible to talk about popular character of indignation, an effective desire for freedom.

The dialect vocabulary is involved in the creation of song symbols of folklore texts included in the writing *And Quiet Flows the Don*. The expression “lazorevyy tsvetok”, meaning the “steppe tulip” in the Don dialects, becomes a symbol of a girl in the Cossack song “Farewell to you, town and place ...”: “Proshchay ty, devka molodaya, // Oy, da proshchay, lazorevyy tsvetok!” (Sholokhov, 1980). Changes in the fate of the serving Cossack were introduced using the phonetic dialectic of “teperya”, their contrast with respect to the former way of life was enhanced by syntactic parallelism “Byvalo, ot zari do zorki // Lezhal u milki da na ruke, // A i ekh, teperya ot zari do zorki // Stoyu s vintovkoyu v ruke...” (Sholokhov, 1980). A song folklore with dialectisms, creatively mastered by the author, expresses the general ideological and emotional mood of people at the crucial stage of Russian history, contributing to the disclosure of the artistic content of the piece of writing.

Small genres of folklore, proverbs and sayings, often found in the epic novel *And Quiet Flows the Don* also reflect the dialectical features of the Don dialect. The lexical dialecticism “godit”, that is, to “wait” (Filin, 1981) was used in the proverb “Nechego godit, tebe ne rodit!”, using which Aksinya responds to Pantelei Profyevich who accused her of sexual libertinism. Another version of this proverb is found in Dahl’s *Explanatory Dictionary of the Living Great Russian Language* “Rodit – nelzya godit” (Dahl, 1998). The proverb “None den – god kormit,” beginning with the phonetic dialectic “None,” sounds during mobilization on the Don, contrasting natural, understandable grain-farming concerns to military interests. “Den letniy god kormit” (Dahl, 1998). The beginning of the military campaign of 1914, as you know, dates back to July 28. In the summer, during mowing, an unnamed character by Sholokhov utters a folk aphorism. Non-personalized replicas create massive folk scenes of the work. The proverb “Nashe delo telyach’ye – poyel da v zakut”, ending with the lexical dialectic “zakut”, meaning “a barn, an

animal shed”, conveys an unconscious submission to the order of the Cossack, who appeared on the Palace Square during the October Revolution together with other sailors who left the Winter Palace at the suggestion of. At the congress of front-line soldiers in Rostov, where various opinions are expressed about the possible actions of the Cossacks, the proverb is pronounced “poka pospeyut kanyshi, tak u babushki ne budet i dushi” with the lexicological dialectic “kanysh”. It was “a product from fancy pastry in a form of a bun, cheesecake, pie” in the Don. Another version of this proverb is recorded in Dahl’s dictionary as follows “Poka u baby pospeyut knyshi, a u deda ne budet dushi” (Dahl, 1998). The famous proverb “Volka boyatsya, i v les ne khodit’ (Dahl, 1998) was given by Sholokhov in the dialectic version “Biryuka boyatsya – v les ne khodit’” and reveals the sorrow and fearlessness of the widow’s fate. In addition to proverbs, numerous sayings also bring folk wisdom to the artistic essence of Sholokhov’s novel. The question “Chto, ty s yego mordy urozhay budesh’ symat? (Will you harvest the crop from his face, or what?)”, asked by Miron Grigoryevich after the wife’s words about Grigory’s pretty face, contains the phonetic dialectic “symat”, that is, harvest. The popular aphorism “Moskva – ona slezam ne dyuzhe verit (Moscow does not really believe in tears)” with the dialect word “dyuzhe” in the meaning of “really” is used in the speech of the “snuffling old man”, comforting his friend, who was forced to abandon the acquired good in war conditions. An aphoristic folklore with the dialect words, creatively accepted by Sholokhov, makes it possible to convey conflicting popular opinions and makes it possible to talk about the polyphony of the writer’s work.

## 7. Conclusion

The study of both folklore and dialect of the epic novel by M. A. Sholokhov makes it possible to verify the folklore basis regarding creative recreation of the worldview of turning historical period. The folklore and dialectic inclusions of different genre, represented by folk songs, proverbs, sayings, spells correlated with tales and true stories, contain phonetic, morphological, lexical, phraseological, word-forming dialectisms, contribute to identification of the specific style of the writer, integrated linguistic and dialectical, nationwide and individual authorship in a literary writing. The creative reflection of the folk and poetic culture, as well as its dialect component, became the basis of the artistic method of Sholokhov, determined his poetics, literary and aesthetic views.

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