

SCTMG 2020**International Scientific Conference «Social and Cultural Transformations in the
Context of Modern Globalism»****CONCEPTS OF *VIRTUE* AND *SIN* IN SPEECH BEHAVIOR OF
KALMYKS**

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Abstract

Not only language, culture and life, but many features of traditional speech behavior of Kalmyks are strongly influenced by Buddhism. Kalmyk people being deeply religious from ancient times, understood a need to control their actions, conduct and feelings. Thus, the language reflects the moral questions and ethical norm developed by the people. There was previously the whole system of behavior rules, a certain system of taboos that involved adults and/or children. The system used the words «prohibited», «should not be done», the concepts of «good» – «bad», «proper» – «improper», «beautiful» – «ugly». Such concepts sourced from Buddhist philosophy as «килнц болх» and its opposite «буйн болх» (the will be blessing), were the main criterion for behavior of Kalmyks. In communication between Kalmyks, indirect threats and warnings are very common that were aimed at attracting attention to the content of speech and a hidden possibility of future troubles. If earlier they were of a clear religious and superstitious nature – “they’ll bring you to khurul (Buddhist temple) and will make you speak the truth”, etc. – nowadays they have a truly moral meaning and often ethical, behavior-oriented focus. Traditions and norms of ethnic etiquette, including speech-related ones, existed in every family and for every person. They were sacred for any person and thus no person could evade keeping them. Ethnic traditions intertwined with religion in forming socially-significant qualities in people: honesty, diligence, obedience, calmness. Most traditional and ethnically-specific features of Kalmyk communicative behavior are more clearly and in more unadulterated form characteristic of older Kalmyks.

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1. Introduction

Traditional speech behavior of Kalmyks is under strong influence not only from their language, culture and lifestyle, but from their religion of Buddhism. Ethical, behavioral and speech norms of Kalmyks created under the influence of Buddhism were transmitted from generation to generation, developed and improved, forming a moral foundation of the Kalmyk people.

Religion called for a necessity to control one's actions, conduct, feelings, preached abstention, moderation, self-limitation, self-control. It taught to abstain from theft, killing, etc. The older generation taught the behavioral norms to the youth. For example, that one shall speak in a measured way and in all cases after listening to the elder person. Before doing anything, it is necessary to think it through. Kalmyks valued restraint very much. There was the whole system of words like «prohibited», «should not be done», the concepts of «good» – «bad», «proper» – «improper», «beautiful» – «ugly». Thus, explanation and persuasion were the main methods of moral education among Kalmyks (Diakieva, 1995).

In communication between Kalmyks, indirect threats and warnings are very common that were aimed at drawing attention to the content of one's speech and a hidden possibility of future troubles. If earlier they were of a clear religious and superstitious nature – “they'll bring you to khurul (Buddhist temple) and will make you speak the truth”, etc. – nowadays they have a truly moral meaning and often ethical, behavior-oriented focus.

2. Problem Statement

Traditions and norms of ethnic etiquette, including speech-related ones, existed in every family and for every person. They were sacred for any person and thus no person could evade keeping them. Thus, ethnic traditions intertwined with religion in forming socially-significant qualities in people: honesty, diligence, obedience, calmness.

Such concepts sourced from Buddhist philosophy as *килниц болх* (there will be a sin) and its opposite *буйн болх* (there will be happiness), were the main criterion for behavior of Kalmyks (Artaeva, 2010).

3. Research Questions

The subject of this paper is the concepts of *virtue* and *sin* in the system of ethnically-specific speech behavior stereotypes of Kalmyks.

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to reveal the functional features of verbalization means for the concepts of *буйн* «virtue» and *килниц, нүл* «sin» in Kalmyk speech behavior. Recently, under the influence of the Russian language, calques from Russian have become very common in Kalmyk speech. It should be noted, that not all phrases being literally translated from Russian may be used in the Kalmyk language. Such research aimed at analysis of various concepts, including those of *буйн* «virtue» and *килниц, нүл* «sin», are in much demand in the modern Kalmyk studies.

5. Research Methods

The principal methods of research were: Descriptive method, direct observation and questionnaire in order to study communicative-pragmatic features of speech behavior, including that of members of various ethnic and linguistic cultures in the situations of verbalizing the concepts of virtue and sin.

6. Findings

As for the concept of virtue, referencing Gak (2000), we may notice that it is such a concept that points to positive properties of a person and does not have specific correlatives signifying corresponding conduct. Let us note that in different religions we may often find similar foundational prescriptions.

In Buddhism, the ten sacred white virtues include the following: do not kill, do not steal, keep moral purity, speak the truth, speak politely, do not break oath, do not slander, do not envy, do not do harm to others, hold to the true teaching. Complying with these ten virtues is called a practice of higher morality. Olzeeva (2007) notes, that from times immemorial nomads had ten benefactions, ten virtues that they kept very strictly.

Comparing to the New Testament, the list of virtues includes *love, patience, piety, faith, justice, prudence, moderation, courage, faith, hope, love*.

It should be noted that three main commandments of Buddhism resemble the Biblical ones: *Thou shalt not kill, thou shalt not steal, thou shalt not bear false witness*.

In the modern dictionary of the Russian language, the word «virtue» is given the following definition: a positive moral quality of a person (*one is full of virtues*); high morality (*Look at her, she is an embodiment of virtue*) (Explanatory dictionary of the Russian Language (2006).

Let us include the corresponding adjective for a bearer of virtue. When analyzing the word «virtuous», which is defined as *one directed by aspiration for good, full of virtues, of high morals*, it should be noted that there are lexical units with the component of «good». This lexical array shall include the words: good-natured – of good nature, soft, placid, well-wishing – showing good attitude, ready to assist in well-being of somebody, expressing compassion, sympathy; kindhearted – kind, responsive, soft, expressing kindness, compassion; kind – well-wishing, doing good deeds, responsive, not begrudging one's things for others, full of goodwill.

The word «good» has modal, attitudinal value. Good is a relative value, as it is impossible to give an unambiguous answer to the question of what people consider good. Each person has a general understanding of good or a concept of good. The word «good» may be used to express positive attitude to things, and also denotes these things themselves. This positive attitude is related to human needs, desires, interests, etc. Usually, people are directed by the criteria of good established in moral norms of their society.

Additionally, the semantic field of “virtue” may include such nouns as compassion, sympathy, help, kindness.

In Kalmyk, the concept of “virtue” is represented by the word *буйн*. In Kalmyk-Russian dictionary, the word *буйн* is given the following definition: (relig.) 1) virtue, piety; 2) funeral feast; (*буйнь кех* – commemorate a dead person) (Kalmyk-Russian Dictionary, 1977).

This lexical unit descends from a Mongolian stem *буян* – 1) good, benefit, virtue; moral and religious merits; 2) good deeds, charity, happiness (Unabridged Academic Mongolian-Russian Dictionary, 2002).

An expression *үхэгсэдийн буян* in Mongolian means «memorial services». This meaning is also present in Kalmyk. It is given in the *Explanatory Dictionary of Traditional life of Kalmyks*. *Буй кех – күн өңгрхлэ гелңгэр ном умшуулх* (arrange funeral service with prayer reading) (Piurbееv, 1996).

In the *Explanatory Dictionary of Traditional life of Kalmyks*, the word *буйн* is defined as a good deed, a virtue (*ач-тус, әрүн керг-үүл*). The following forms are its derivatives: *буйнч* – well-doer, *буйнта* – virtuous, pious.

The synonymic chain of the word *буйнта* includes the following adjectives: 1) *цаһан седклтә* «a good natured person» (lit. With a white, clean soul); 2) *сән седклтә* «a good-natured person» (lit. with a good soul); 3) *сән күн* «a good person», «kind».

In the consciousness of Kalmyks, the concept of «sin», defined as a black, bad deed that disgraces one's honor, is given a religious meaning and expressed in breaking the ethical norms having arisen under the influence of Buddhism. In Buddhism, sin is related to abstaining from ten non-virtues. Of those ten, three are related to deeds of the flesh, four – to deeds of the speech, and three – to deeds of the mind.

Three physical non-virtues are: Taking life of a living being: from killing an insect to killing a human being; theft: acquiring property of others without their consent independent of value of the property and whether the deed is done in person or through a proxy; sexual offense: debauchery.

Four non-virtues of speech: lie: cheating others in words or deeds; slander: bringing dissension or discord, inciting those in agreement to disagree or those in disagreement to go further in it; rudeness: to insult others; verbiage: to speak about stupid things under the influence of desires and other vices.

Three non-virtues of mind: envy: to dream about having something, to desire something in property of another person; malignity: a willingness to induce harm to others, whether big or small; fallacious opinions: to present something existing as non-existing, e.g., reincarnation, etc..

In Kalmyk, the word *нүл* is often used as a synonym for “килңц”: *нүүлән әдлх* – to wash away one's sin, *нүл һарһх* – to sin (Monraev, 2002). This word is also used when characterizing a person. For example, Kalmyks will call a calm, poised, kind person *нүл уга күн* (harmless person): *нүл уга күн тамас чигн әддго* – a person without a sin is not afraid of hell. The expression *нүл уга* is also used to characterize children: they are considered clean, sinless, as they have not yet did any black deeds.

The word *килңц* may be used in a collocation *килңц болх*, translated as “prevention of a bad deed”. It follows that one of the main component in the concept of «sin» in the Kalmyk language is prohibition. There was even the whole system of prohibitions, implemented in words “prohibited”, “should not be done”. *Бичә му йор таттн, бичә килңц һарһтн!* (do not do prohibited deeds, it may lead to sin) □ is a Kalmyk saying. Another expression close in meaning to *sin* is *му йор* (bad omen, a foreboding). These included sitting with heels touching each other; putting hands behind one's back, sitting wrapping both legs with arms; whistling and singing in bed. It was considered that performing such actions, a child transgresses (*му йор, килңц*). *Му йор* (bad omen) designates an action that may lead to sin, get somebody into trouble.

Prohibition is also conveyed with lexical units *цер*, or, rarer *хөрлм*: *цээртә* means “forbidden”, *цер бәрх* means “to abstain from certain actions for a determined period of time”, lit. *to hold prohibition*. Kalmyks had specific cases where it was required to follow this custom. For example, *элн-садын нер келхдән цээрлх* (“to abstain from naming relatives”, as a married Kalmyk woman was forbidden from calling her in-laws by names), *тәмкәс цээрлх* (“to abstain from smoking”).

In the modern society, the concept of “sin” undergoes a change of meaning. In order to establish how modern youth in Kalmykia defines sin, the authors conducted a survey of senior high school pupils in the city of Elista and first-year students of the Institute of Kalmyk Philology and Eastern Studies. The respondents were asked to name vices which on their opinion pertain to the category of sin (the survey was answered in respondent’s native language).

The vast majority of Russian-language respondents (88 %) designate the following concepts as the sin: murder (at that, in some cases the object of the action was stated, e.g., killing a person, killing a woman, killing a child), theft, lie, betrayal, violence, alcoholism, drug addiction. 25 % of respondents included with the sin meanness, unfaithfulness, suicide, desecration of graves and sacred objects. 12 % of respondents think that envy, disrespect of elders, adultery, greed, abortion and slander pertain to the sin.

We should also mention vices that were found in the questionnaire results once or twice: hypocrisy, vandalism, denial of assistance, causing harm to others, any form of cruelty, prostitution, spite, rancor, scorn, nationalism, avarice, vanity, terrorism.

The respondents also mentioned actions pertaining to sin: playing with food, leaving one’s family in dire straits, giving one’s children to orphanage, giving up one’s child for adoption, cursing anybody, not valuing life, committing a crime, hitting a woman, laughing at a sick person, hurting a weak, torturing animals, being a skinhead.

The fact that the pupils give prominence to universal ethical concepts is possibly explained by the fact that school syllabus in literature in the senior high school includes classical works of literature of 19th-20th century, which assumes analysis of moral problems, social vices, etc.

Understanding of sin demonstrated by respondents lines up with the religious understanding of sin, however, certain differences may be highlighted. For example, while murder, theft, lie are covered by the main commandments of Christianity (thou shalt not kill, thou shalt not steal, thou shalt not bear false witness), drug addition, rape, terrorism nationalism, etc. reflect the problems of the modern society. We think it is important to note that in Christianity, the first four commandments pertain to the attitude of people to God, and only the last six – to human interactions. Senior high school pupils usually distinguish the concepts that are related exclusively to human interactions.

In answers of Kalmyks there is a confusion of the concepts of *килнц* (sin) and *му йор* (bad omen). Let us give examples of such answers where “sin” is represented as an action: *кү, әмд юм алх* (to kill humans, living beings); *хулха кех* (to steal); *хүдл келх* (to cheat); *күүнд харал тәвх* (to curse people); *күүнд му кех* (to harm people); *әк-әцкән әс күндлх* (to disrespect parents); *күүнд му санх, күүнд хар санх, күүг му келх* (to think or talk badly about others).

Kalmyks hold as a sin not only actions, but bad thoughts as well. The thoughts of a person shall be clean and the actions shall be sincere.

There are also concepts that were mentioned in Kalmyk answers no more than three times (in these answers *килңи* means “prohibition”): *элкэн теврх* (folding one’s arms in front of one’s chest); *бийән алх* (suicide); *һазр даңгин, йириндән малтдмн биш* (one should not constantly dig earth without a reason); *эврәннь үрән хайх* (abandoning children); *хуучн хувцна захиг һазрт хайхм биш* (it is prohibited to throw away clothes or collars of worn clothes); *күүнд му болхла әмтн терүнд нөкд болсн уга – килңи* (to deny assistance in time of hardships); *сөөләр үс хәәчлдмн биш* (to cut hair during the night); *һазр даңгин цокад бәәхлә – килңи, маляһар һазр цокх, һазр таимгар цокх* (it is prohibited to hit earth with a whip); *һал усар унтрах* (extinguish fire with water).

Kalmyks have many traditions, customs and believes about fire. The fire are never extinguished with water. Moreover, doing so is considered a grave sin. Hearth or bonfire is extinguished with sand or earth. The following words were considered a terrific curse: «Let waters quench your hearth» (Olzeeva, 2007).

From time immemorial, Kalmyk nomads held to certain rules that where intended to preserve house, farm, animals, housewares, belongings in a good condition and health. The elder Kalmyks taught the younger ones, warning them from ill-judged and reckless actions by imposing prohibitions, taboos.

Centuries-long experience of people, their customs, traditions and communicative norms are most clearly seen in various folklore texts: proverbs and sayings, riddles and tales, legends and fables. Such works are among the most important means for educating the younger generation.

Proverbs pertain to the area of the language that primarily explicates its cultural semantics. Thanks to that feature, they may be seen as signs of the ethnic cultural code and thus serve as a source of cultural-ethnic interpretation.

In Kalmyk proverbs, the sin – *килңи* – is understood as something intolerable, that shall be avoided and thus a person shall be held responsible for their actions: «*нүүлән нульмсарн уһах, килңиән келәри долах*» (to wash one’s sins with tears and lick away one’s offenses with tongue), «*тевчңһүһәс – буйн, килңиәс – цусн*» (condescension results in virtue, sin results in blood) (Proverbs, sayings and riddles of Kalmyks of Russia and Oirats of China, 2007).

The thought of unity of the opposites – sin and innocence – is expressed with opposition of the concepts of *килңи* or *нүл* (sin) on the one side, and *буйн* (virtue) on the other side: «*зурхачин әкнь – килңитә, әмчин әкнь – буйнта*» (astrology is a source of sin, medicine is a source of virtue), «*хамтулснь – буйн, халңулснь – килңи*» (good thing is when friendship brings together, sin is when separates), «*әвицүлсн буйнта, әвдүрүлсн килңитә*» (making peace is a blessing, causing a quarrel is a sin), «*нүл буйн хойр – ах дү хойр*» (sin and virtue are full brothers).

In the ethnic consciousness, the sin is measurable, as it is evident from the following proverbs: «*авснь нег нүүлтә, алдснь арвн нүүлтә*» (who dared to steal committed a sin, the one being plundered committed ten sins), «*хулхач күн нег килңитә, хулхачин эзн хойр килңитә*» (the thief has one sin, the owner of the stolen has two), «*хулхач күн нег нүүлтә, хулхан эзн арвн нүүлтә*» (the thief has one sin, the plundered has ten (as he mistrusts many others)).

Besides, there are examples demonstrating that to a larger degree than the offense itself, a thought of possibility to commit the offense is the sin: «*алснас – әмлсн килңитә*» (a thought of murder is more sin than the murder itself); telling is laughable, keeping secret is sinful.

Additionally, proverbs may contain directions to behavioral norms: «килнц уга күн тамас чигн ээдго» (innocent is not afraid of hell), «тевичгүхэс – буйн, килнцэс – цусн» (condescension results in virtue, sin results in blood).

7. Conclusion

Thus, it may be concluded that the concepts of virtue and sin are verbalized in various lexical units in Kalmyk speech behavior. The lexical field of virtue may include the nouns signifying moral values and the adjectives characterizing the carrier of such an attribute. In Kalmyk, the word “virtue” points to moral qualities of a person, while Ten Virtues define personal behavior. The results of the questionnaire have shown that Kalmyk and Russian respondents have many fundamental provisions based upon commandments of Buddhism and Christianity, however, understanding of the lexical unit “sin” have some ethnically-based difference determined by the type of the culture. Besides, each generation forms their own system of values and the answers given by the respondents, representing the modern youth support this idea. Additionally, it may be concluded that sin appears in Kalmyk proverbs as a complex, multidimensional concepts, formed under the influence of both religious ideas and everyday knowledge.

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