
TIME IN KALMYK FOLKLORE DISCOURSE BASED ON THE ‘JANGAR’ EPIC AND PROVERBIAL PAROEMIAS

Valeriya Vasilyevna Salykova^{*1}, Ellara Ulyaevna Omakaeva² and
Alexandra Vasilyevna Alexeeva²

¹ *Kalmyk State University, Pushkin Street 11, Elista 358000, Republic Kalmykia, Russia*

² *Science Federal State Budgetary Institute for Humanities of the Russian Academy of Sciences,
Ilshkin Street 8, Elista 358000, Republic Kalmykia, Russia*

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Abstract

The article is devoted to the problem of studying linguistic expression methods of time meanings in the Kalmyk folklore discourse. Kalmyk epic is less studied from the point of Linguistics. The authors argue that the language of the epic gives an indication of the folk world view of multi-temporal elements. In the article, we apply a discursive approach. The authors combine the Kalmyk folklore texts in the epic and paroemia discourses. Because the language characterizes the ethnicity in terms of mentality and culture, it is possible to reconstruct the ethnic groups' outlook complexes. As an arrangement and description of lexical means, objectifying time in epic and paroemic texts, the article uses their representations in the form of a semantic field. The article reveals the essence of the concept of 'semantic field'. The authors make a survey of the studies devoted to the consideration of ethno-linguistic aspect of the time image in different nations. On this basis, the authors consider that the synthesis of different approaches and the use of different types of sources are necessary when observing this category. They attempt to get an idea of temporal fragment within the Kalmyk native-speakers' linguistic worldview by analyzing the temporal tokens occurring in the epic texts and proverbs. The article notes that, in the Kalmyk language, temporal relations are treated as a type of space relations. There is a characteristic of the three main types of time in the Kalmyk language: mythological, historical, everyday. Analysis of temporal semantic field leads to the conclusion that, in contrast to the spatial representations, the time concepts are secondary (metaphorical). In language and artistic images of Kalmyk epic and proverbs, we found the fullest representation of time expression of the Kalmyks. The relevance of the study is due to the importance of the concepts of space and time in general, and features of folk categorization of the world in particular. A detailed analysis is possible for the categories of time in every folk genre version of the linguistic worldview, as well as identifying equivalent temporal vocabulary in different linguistic cultures.

Keywords: time, Jangar, proverb, analysis, semantics

*E-mail: syakhlya@list.ru

1. Introduction

Today's research on the Kalmyk epic and proverbs, directed, as a rule, to the decision of purely folkloristic problems. Really, there are no linguistic works. Proverb language has not been the subject of a special study [1-3]. As for the language of the epic [4-6], in the dissertation of the candidate V.V. Salykova dedicated to the epic vocabulary, temporalities have already been considered [7].

Folklore and language intersect exactly where it comes to the view of the world. From this point of view, study of folklore text is important to clarify the language and culture typology [8]. The value of learning the epic and proverb language is, above all, that they mostly clearly reflect Kalmyk folklore view of the world in which coexist various interpretations. Archaic elements of ideology, mentality, mythological concepts, mythopoetical views of the world preserved in the epic and proverb language should be sought [1].

The proposed article is devoted to the analysis of linguistic cultural importance of time category on the material of folklore Kalmyk texts.

2. Methods

Using a discursive approach, we combine viewed folklore Kalmyk texts in the epic and paroemic discourses that are realized as a set of relevant texts.

From the standpoint of linguocultural approach, temporal vocabulary is studied in close connection with the culture. The feature of modern linguofolklore research is an attempt of reconstruction of philosophical systems of various ethnic groups. The main characteristic of the ethnic group, which determines the type of its mentality and culture is language, the study of which cannot be fruitful without the analysis of such key concept as the linguistic view of the world. In the language (especially in its vocabulary), the ethno-cultural environment is reflected where this language is used, and this environment is inseparable from ethnos or subethnos habitat.

In this regard, the linguistic study of folklore (epic and proverbial) of the text seems to us important both for proper disclosure of the language specifics of the epic and paroemias, the characteristics of the lexical-semantic and figurative-expressive means system, and for more in-depth study of language and folklore style in general. The relevance of this study is determined by the need on the basis on the specific materials to improve the lexical representation analysis methods of the basic temporal concepts.

Important arrangement and description technique of the lexical means objectifying time in the epic and paroemic texts is their representation as a semantic field.

Traditionally, the concept of a field is a set of linguistic units, united by common content and reflecting the conceptual, substantive or functional similarity of designated events, so the field appears as a mode of existence and gathering of lexical items with common invariant properties.

Notions of time are largely determined by the culture of the ethnic group. However, the ethnic specificity of time perception affects the behaviour of society members. Ethnic side of this issue has been studied by L.N. Gumilev [9]. Great contribution to the comparative-historical and typological study of the time image in different nations, including Mongolian, at different stages of development have been brought by scientific ethnologists and historians of culture [10, 11], referring somehow to the ethno-linguistic aspect as well.

Temporal vocabulary based on Russian and some other languages is covered in works of domestic scientists, in particular, N.A. Potaenko [12, 13], M.A. Krongauz [14] and others. Time models presented in different languages, cultures and types of discourse (folklore, poetry, prose) became the object of study of one of the 'Logical Language Analysis' editions [15].

The first attempts to study this problem in the Mongolian belong to philologists G.T. Pyurbeev [16, 17], T.S. Esenova [18], E.U. Omakaeva [19, 20], and others.

As one of the fundamental categories of human life and culture, the category of time is the study object of various areas of the Humanities. Various aspects of time are considered by modern American researcher Anthony Aveni, the author of the book 'Empires of Time', which came out in 1990 [21] and later was published in Russian. In particular, they are issues of biorhythmology, origin and development of the western calendar, including the concepts of year and time accounting systems that belonged to disappeared peoples of Central America (Maya, Aztec, Inca), as well as the work highlights the history of the calendar systems of ancient China.

Time multidimensionality eliminates the one-sided approach to it only as a philosophical category. It can be assumed that the synthesis of the various approaches and reliance on sources of different types, including folklore, will help to come little closer to unravelling the key concept of the human being.

Not by chance, we hear calls for the creation of an interdisciplinary science that J.T. Fraser, the author of such books as 'The Genesis and Evolution of Time: a Critique of Interpretations in Physics', 'Time as Conflict', 'Time the Familiar Stranger', 'Of Time, Passion, and Knowledge', which contain a review of research on the problem of time, propose to call 'chronosophy' (chronometry, tempology – in the terminology of other scientists). Noting the complexity of the described phenomenon, J.T. Fraser wrote: "Time is a symptom or correlate of the structural and functional complexity of the matter" [22].

Many works are devoted to the problem of the time phenomenon definition and interpretation in the language and culture of the Mongolian people, although the problem of temporality in general is much less studied than the problem of locativity (space). "Time is usually considered as a kind of an ordering scheme, similar to the space, but that is easier, as it has only one dimension." [23]

Time in outlook and culture of the Mongolian people cannot be considered outside the context of space. It is intangible, vague, it is dissolved in the space [24]. In Kalmyk language, we observe the so-called cohesivity of time:

time relationships are treated as a kind of the space ones. Most postpositions have double (cohesive-temporal) semantics, for example, ‘front/before, earlier’.

Kalmyks, like other Mongolian peoples, have three main types of time: the mythological, historical and everyday [25]. The first one is recorded in the folk-epic genres of folk art, the second one is in the calendar system, finally, the third is in the daily orientation in time of the Kalmyks by the realities of the nomadic world. The mythological traces of time perception is clearly visible in the introduction of the heroic epic ‘Jangar’. For example, counting of the epic events begins with the earliest times (эртнин эрт цагт/ertnin ert tsagt). In time of propagation of the Burkhangs (deities) religion, the hero of the story, a nice bogdo Jangar, was born.

To get an idea of how native speakers (Kalmyks) perceive a particular piece of reality (in this case - time), it is necessary to identify the meaning of lexical units. Naïve time model can be reconstructed by the semantic interpretation of the Kalmyk (Oirat) temporal vocabulary.

In the semantic structure of any language, there is a semantic field of time, which unites the temporal lexical items and grammatical forms, the internal structure of which is a “different oppositions characterizing and dividing the general concept of time” [26]. The external structure of the time field is determined by its connections with other semantic fields, which appear in the transition from the concept of time to other concepts, and vice versa.

As the tokens with the meaning of time are semantically and grammatically heterogeneous, in composition of the semantic field of time, we highlight the following lexical and grammatical levels: i) substantive (nouns and pronouns); ii) adverbial (adverbs); iii) predicative (verbs); iv) attributive-predicative (adjectives).

Full description of the semantic field of time requires an analysis of all lexical means, representing temporal sphere of concepts in this language, which can hardly be carried out in one single article. Therefore, we restricted ourselves to a few, the most frequently encountered in the epic text key lexical items with the ‘temporal’ semantics, in particular, with the temporal meaning of the time measure, as well as proverbs on time containing its moral and philosophical evaluation.

The highest accuracy of temporal orientation is achieved by means of substantive notation. Only nouns can help to convey an accurate measurement of time and dating. Therefore, in the sequel we consider only nominal and adverbial tokens (united by a common semantic feature meaning within the semantic subgroups), as these units are the core of the field of time (i.e. more likely to reflect objective time), and constitute the most numerous groups within the field.

It should also be noted that the nominal and adverbial temporal tokens are very close to each other. Their closeness is manifested in the fact that the starting unit for the formation of time adverbs in most cases was the substantive tokens (day, night, year, etc.). Specialization of the substantive names as circumstances leads to their transition into the category of adverbial (day–daily).

We can identify several levels of semantics of цаг (tsag) 'time' – the core of the semantic field. Time can be annual, seasonal, monthly, ten-day, weekly, daily, day and night.

Annual time is presented by a token жил (gzil) 'year', for example: һөөтн гзил – 'next year'.

As we know, in the Kalmyk calendar each year corresponds to one of the 12 animals. Here are the Kalmyk names and their equivalents in English: Бар жил (Bar gzil) – Year of the Tiger, Туула жил (Tuula gzil) – Year of the Rabbit, Лу жил (Lou gzil) – Year of the Dragon, Моһа жил (Moha gzil) – Year of the Snake, Мөрн жил (Mörn gzil) – Year of the Horse, Хөн жил (Hөн gzil) – Year of the Sheep, Мөчн жил (Mөчн gzil) – Year of the Monkey, Така жил (Taka gzil) – Year of the Chicken, Ноһа жил (Noha gzil) – Year of the Dog, Һаһа жил (Haha gzil) – Year of the Pig, Хулһн жил (Hulһn gzil) – Year of the Mouse, Үкр жил (Үкр gzil) – Year of the Cow.

In Kalmyk linguoculture, year has not only a zoomorphic image (both a general – an image of a camel, and private – an image of one of the twelve animals described in Kalmyk calendar), but also anthropomorphic, teonimic (the year master is a divinity, Цаһан Аав (Tsahan Aav) 'White Old Man').

Each calendar year is divided into several seasons, usually four (дөрвн цаг (dөрвн tsag): үвл (uvl)/winter, хавр (harvr)/spring, зун (zurn)/summer, намр (narmr)/fall). Although in proverbs, there are all four tokens, it is not clear whether such a division is primordial, or in ancient times, there was a binary division for two seasons. In proverb Намр хураp эклдг, Хавр хунаp эклдг (Narmr hurar ekldg, Harvr khunar ekldg) / Autumn begins with rain, Spring begins with the arrival of swans / communication between autumn and rain (atmospheric precipitation image), and spring and a bird (ornithological swan image) is updated.

Great importance was attached to such phase of the lunar month, as the full moon: дүүрһ нарһ арвн тавна сар (дүүрһ narһ арвн тавна сар) (full moon, i.e. the fifteenth lunar day).

The particular interest is drawn to the daily time [27]: ентн өдр сө һойрһ кегр (the business for a day).

Time during the day was determined by the astronomical position of the Sun, which is the main spatial and temporal landmark: һал үдин аһнд (һал үдин аһнд) (at high noon); өр цәәтл (өр tsәәtl) (before dawn); өрүнднь өрлә босад (өрүнднь өрлә босад) (getting up early in the morning, at sunrise).

Designation of the day time in Russian and Kalmyk linguistic view of the world depends on what kind of activity it is filled, in contrast to the Western European model, where, on the contrary, the activities which must be done is determined by the day time.

In the view of the Kalmyks and Russian, day or night, and in general time means an occupation with some specific content, every time it is specific and defined. Here is an example of the Kalmyk fairy-tale, which is called 'Цагин селгән (Tsagin selgән)' ('Change of Time'), which explains the structure of the world in terms of time: "Орчлһ гисн сө өдр хойр. Өдрт көдләд, сөөд

амрнавидн” (Orchln gisn sө өдр hoыр. Өдрт көдлэд, сөөд амрnavидн) (Universe is a day and night. During the day we work, at night we rest).

The same is said in the Kalmyk proverb: Барс царт эс босхла өдрин йовдл хоцрдг, Баһ царт эс сурхла насна йовдл хоцрдг (Bars tsagt es boskhla өдрin yovdl hotsrdg, Bah tsagt es surhla nasna yovdl hotsrdg) / If do not get up in the hour of the Tiger (i.e., early) – do not have time to do the daily business, If do not learn in the youth – lag behind from life /. This proverb has another aspect, emphasizing the young age as not just the most opportune moment to adjust to life as well as, perhaps, the only possible one.

Analysis of temporal words and expressions based on the material of chapters Xinjiang Oirat and Kalmyk versions of the heroic epic ‘Jangar’, as well as of the proverbial texts makes it possible to identify the following thematic groups: common names of time (tsag/period, era, time), the names of the cyclically recurring large time intervals (gzil/year, gzilin tsag/season, sar/month), the names of the main parts of the day (өдр/day, сө/night), code time determinations, the terms related to time calculation of human life (nasn/age), and calendar terms.

Time is often perceived through the prism of the human nature. Model ‘time-nature’ is presented in the Kalmyk folklore with anthropomorphic, zoomorphic and fitomorphic metaphors. In proverbs, the time symbolism is closely related to plant and animal life. Idea of water as a liquid, some fluid essential substance in the form of rain, and fauna in the form of bird are recorded in the epic in the characterization of the country Bumba, causing relevant associations: бүр-бүр хурта (bүр-bүр hurta) (with drizzle).

The key idea of the Kalmyk linguistic view of the world, as well as Russian is to do everything on time and do not procrastinate: Эндр күцэх көдлмшиг манһдур гиж бичэ бэ (Indre күтсөһ көдлmshig manhdur gizh bichэ бэ) / Do not procrastinate a today work for tomorrow / (En. Never put off till tomorrow what you can do today).

Present is real, and the future is uncertain, so Kalmyks clearly preferred the present. This is reflected in one Kalmyk proverb applied in two versions, temporal (more common), and locative (less common.) Here is the first option with temporal tokens: Манһдурк өөкнэс эндрк оошк (Manhdurk өөкнэс endrk оошк) / Lung today is better than bacon tomorrow / (En. A feather in the hand is better than a bird in the air.)

The same meaning is expressed in the ‘locative’ variant of the same proverb, but it is closer to the English proverb as involved locative tokens (in English proverb, loci hand and sky are indicated, in the Kalmyk – yard and hand, as we can see, one of the loci matches) һаза бәэх маһнас һарт бәэсн оошк (һaza бәәһ маһnas hart бәәsn оошк) / Lung in the hand is better than meat in the yard / (En. A feather in the hand is better than a bird in the air). Coexistence of the two variants of the same proverb, as the feature of Kalmyk postpositions noted above (double semantics), suggests that one of the main properties of time is its inseparability from space, taken together, they form a space-time

continuum. In folk view of the world, a single category 'space-time' or chronotype is detected, according to M.M. Bakhtin [28].

These examples reflect the primordial spatial representations and secondary (metaphorical) nature of time. In the second case, we have a metaphorical likening of relations between a man and time as a movement in the space. First of all, the man feels himself in the space, and only after in time.

3. Conclusions

The study of the linguistic model of time in the Kalmyk language on the material of words denoting time intervals allows us to conclude that in the presence of typological features, category of time is differently presented in different cultures and languages, revealing the character of the national worldview and system of values of the ethnic group. Representation of the Kalmyks of the time in the unity of the naive and scientific knowledge, philosophical and cultural understanding, spiritual and religious understanding, moral and aesthetic evaluation found its fullest expression were fully expressed in language and artistic images of Kalmyk epic and paroemias. Consideration of the main ways of calculating the time, expressed in calendar system, and symbolic images of time set forth in the folklore texts, reveals the main features of the temporal perceptions prevailing in the Kalmyk culture.

A further study of the category of time on the basis of greater factual material could be the prospect of this work. Expansion of the material is possible by connecting the contexts of other folklore genres, literary works of writers and poets, and other texts. Another promising direction can be considered as a more detailed analysis of the characteristics of language representation of time in every folk genre version of the linguistic view of the world and idiolect of each author, as well as identifying equivalent temporal vocabulary in different linguistic cultures with the release of non-equivalent groups of tokens and determining the ways of their translation into another language.

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