

MORAL CONCEPTS IN CHECHEN ETHNO-PEDAGOGY ÇEÇEN ETNOPEDAGOJİSİNDE AHLAKİ KAVRAMLAR

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Abstract

Moral concepts which occupy a special place in Chechnya's spiritual, moral and ethical world view are considered in the article. One of the most basic and universal concepts in Chechen that expresses their world view is "yakh" which is associated with the main way a human being realises one's duty and responsibility to society, one's country and one's people. The semantic structure of the concept "yakh" includes moral norms of life such as nobility, generosity, justice and honesty. These characteristics are conveyed structurally and semantically in Chechen fiction. Chechen literature, with its ethics and peculiar moral backbone, is exemplified by such classics as M. Isayev, M. S. Gadayev, A. Aidami, A. Aidamirov, M. Mamakayev, A. Suleimanov and others. Another moral concept which every Chechen, irrespective of ethnicity or gender, can attain the highest degree of morality, is konakhallah. The moral concepts in Chechen ethno-pedagogy are basic in the formation of a growing person's world view, perception and attitude. Unfortunately, the humanistic potential embedded in culture, including in national literature, is not sufficiently utilised in the school curriculum. In this context, an attempt to analyse moral concepts in Chechen literature, using the works of the prominent Chechen writer, thinker and pedagogue A. Suleimanov as an example has been made. This author wrote about life, about people, about patriotism, about love. Chechen national culture, its originality and uniqueness are reflected in literature.

Keywords: Moral concepts, "yakh", Konakhallah, Chechen ethnopedagogy

Öz

Makalede Çeçenya'nın manevi, ahlaki ve etik dünya görüşünde özel bir yer tutan ahlaki kavramlar ele alınmaktadır. Çeçenlerin dünya görüşlerini ifade eden en temel ve evrensel kavramlardan biri, insanın topluma, ülkesine ve halkına karşı görev ve sorumluluğunu yerine getirmesinin temel yolu ile ilişkilendirilen "yakh"tır. "Yakh" kavramının anlamsal yapısı asalet, cömertlik, adalet ve dürüstlük gibi hayatın ahlaki normlarını içerir. Bu özellikler Çeçen romanlarında yapısal ve anlamsal olarak aktarılır. Çeçen edebiyatı, etiği ve kendine özgü ahlaki omurgasıyla, M. Isayev, M. S. Gadayev, A. Aidami, A. Aidamirov, M. Mamakayev, A. Süleymanov ve diğer klasikler tarafından örneklendirilir. Etnik köken veya cinsiyetten bağımsız olarak, her Çeçen'in sahip olduğu başka bir ahlaki kavram, ahlakın en yüksek derecesine ulaşabilen, konakhallah'tır. Çeçen etnopedagojisinde, ahlaki kavramlardaki algı ve tutum, büyüyen bir kişinin dünya görüşünün oluşumundaki temeldir. Ne yazık ki, ulusal literatürde yer alan, kültüre gömülü hümanist potansiyel, okul müfredatında yeterince kullanılmamaktadır. Bu bağlamda önde gelen Çeçen yazar, düşünür ve pedagog A. Süleymanov'un eserlerinden örnek alınarak Çeçen edebiyatındaki ahlaki kavramlar çözümlenmeye çalışılmıştır. Bu yazar hayat, insanlar, vatanseverlik ve aşk hakkında yazdı. Çeçen ulusal kültürü, özgünlüğü ve benzersizliği edebiyata yansır.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Ahlak kavramı, "yah", Konakhallah, Çeçen etnopedagojisi

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1. INTRODUCTION

It is well known that spiritual values expressed in a society's culture exert tremendous influence on all aspects of life. Moral concepts occupy a special place in Chechnya's spiritual, moral and ethical world view. One of the most basic and universal concepts in Chechen that expresses their world view is "yakh". The main goal of Chechen traditional culture is to bring up a versatile and ambitious person. Chechen society has always deplored deviations from moral standards, and even in the present day these deviations are considered equally unacceptable.

Ahmadov justly observes that "traditional Chechen society was originally very rigid in its evaluation of man's conduct, and a person was esteemed for one's moral standards. Neither previous merits, honour, name or ability were taken into account. All those virtues could be devalued in the eyes of Chechens and destroyed by a single unworthy act" (Ahmadov, 2006). In our opinion, strict requirements and limitations on the personality of a person growing up in Chechen traditional culture were determined by a number of objective factors. As a rule, there were strict requirements and restrictions connected to the moral aspect of personal formation. There is no doubt, however, that respect for the individual is the main value of traditional Chechen culture.

Ethical concepts dominate the hierarchy of cultural concepts in Chechen ethno-pedagogy, which represent the essence of their national character. As a rule, they characterise not only a person's behaviour but also one's way of life and spiritual purity. The concept "yakh" is one of those concepts that hold a key position in the Chechen consciousness. The concept "yakh" reflects Chechen ethnicity and is marked by national cultural markings. "Yakh" is a complicated social designation. It does not name a concrete, objectively existing object or phenomenon. "Yakh" refers more to an inner state that cannot be fully and utterly recognised and explained. "Yakh", is a rather multifaceted concept. Our analysis of the linguistic and cultural features of the concept "yakh", based on the method of frequency analysis, allows us to identify the main images that arise in the minds of Chechen speakers when they use this lexical term.

We have singled out the most vivid and concrete images that appear in the minds of Chechen speakers: striving to be the best, courage, honour, dignity, nobility, modesty, pride, generosity and spirituality. "Yakh" has no literal translation. M. Akhmadov defines "yakh" as "excelling in good deeds". We believe that "yakh" is wider than just excelling in good works: it is the driving force behind being good, the presence of inner pride that makes one want to come first in everything – in study, work and combat. Very often it is "yakh" that prompts a person to take risks or desperate actions. The semantic structure of the concept "yakh" includes moral norms of life such as nobility, generosity, justice and honesty. These characteristics are conveyed structurally and semantically in Chechen fiction.

The aim of this article is to analyze moral concepts which occupy a special place in Chechnya's spiritual, moral and ethical world view.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The methodological basis is presented by a few scientific sources (Akhmadov, 2006; Khasbulatova, 2019), since there are still no significant studies in Chechnya on the designated topic. The *Chechen traditional culture and ethics* written by M.M. Akhmadov is a culturological study of Chechen religious and moral and ethical values which are expressed in such traditional categories as "iman", "yakh", "marsho", "sobar", etc. As an illustration of these formulas, the author uses ancient legends, illis, proverbs, sayings and artistic works of writers which reveal the character and aspirations of the Vainakhs during a long period of historical development. Z.I. Khasbulatova's work *Traditional culture of child-rearing among Chechens (XIX-early XX centuries)* is concerned with gender stereotypes of family relations and roles of men and women in the up-bringing of children in the traditional Chechen society. This article, as well as the previous works of this author (Muskhanova, 2017; 2017), is in fact an attempt to fill this gap in Chechen ethnopedagogy. The paper uses such methods of scientific research as analysis, systematization, generalization.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Ethical concepts constitute the textual dominance of Chechen folklore and literature. Нанас дена ма войла яхъ йоцу к1ант. И вича ма вехийла дийнахъ сарралц (in Chechen). (May a mother not bear a son who doesn't have yahya? And if she does bear him, may he not live to see the light of day). The concept "yakh" determines the moral essence of an individual. «Яхъ д1а мало», «Яхъах ма воха», «Яхъах вуъззийна къонах ву и» (in Chechen), that is "Yahya d1a malo", "Yahya ma voha", "Yahya vuzzyna къonakh vu i", or in relation to a woman «Яхъах юззийна стаг ю и». "Yakh" is an integral quality of a person that makes one not retreat in the face of difficulties and makes one fearlessly face death, and it is also one of the ways a human being realises one's duty and responsibility to society, one's country and one's people. It is worth mentioning one historical fact that illustrates "yakh" behaviour. On September 5, 1819, Tsarist troops stormed the Chechen village of Dadi-Yurt. It was one of the bloodiest periods of the Caucasian War. A call was heard from the minaret of the village mosque. On that unhappy day, everyone – the elderly, women and children – fought. Mothers instructed their sons to fight, urging them to keep their yakh, to despise death, to show no cowardice in battle. The tsarist troops shelled the village with artillery. The villagers defended themselves with ferocity. They stood firm in their intransigence and courage. The forces were unequal, and the village's dzhigits (young men) perished fearlessly. The women, who did not leave their men behind, also showed their courage on that day. Dadi Aibika, daughter of the founder of the village of Dady Centoroyevsky, and Amaran Zaza were on the square in front of the mosque, encouraging the defenders of the village with their songs. With daggers in their hands, Dadi Aibika and Aidi Jansiga were killed, pierced by the bayonets of Tsarist soldiers. Amaran Zaza died under the debris of a minaret bombed by the tsar's artillery. Only 14 seriously wounded men and a few dozen girls and women were taken prisoner that day. However, when crossing

the Terek River, 46 Chechen girls threw themselves into the turbulent river taking their captors with them and thus retaining their honour and dignity. This historical episode is not merely an example of fearlessness but also the manifestation of “yakh” as the inner spiritual need to preserve honour, pride and dignity.

Moral concepts are also reflected in Chechen national literature. Literature does not offer ready-made recipes for solving particular moral and social problems, but motivates the reader to search for them oneself, making one think, analyse, compare and summarise. The work of every writer has huge spiritual and moral potential, because while studying these works the reader comes to know the world around, the environment, one distinguishes between good and evil and orientates oneself in the real world. The study of literature is associated with the harmonious development of one's personality. It is about learning the history of one's own people, their way of life and their ethnic culture. Chechen literature, with its ethics and peculiar moral backbone, is exemplified by such classics as M. Isayev, M. S. Gadayev and A. Aidami, to mention only a few ones. The main ideas of these leading works of Chechen literature (M. Isayev, A. Aidamirov, M. Mamakayev, A. Suleimanov and others, are humanism, love for one's people and, one's soul. In our opinion, the humanistic potential embedded in culture, including in national literature, is not sufficiently utilised in the school curriculum. As A. Einstein wrote: “The most important human endeavour is the pursuit of morality”. Our inner stability and our very existence depend on it. Only morality in our deeds gives beauty and dignity to our life. To make it a living force and to help us clearly understand its meaning is the main task of education. In this context, we have attempted to analyse moral concepts in Chechen literature, using the works of the prominent Chechen writer, thinker and pedagogue A. Suleimanov as an example.

As historical analysis shows, the Chechen people's life at all stages of its development was rooted in the attainment of supreme spirituality and morality, which is expressed in the concept “konakhallah”. Many nations of the world have worked out and based their lives on moral codes of honour, like that of the European knight, the Japanese Bushido samurai, and the Afghani Pashtunwali. A comparative analysis of these codes of honour allows us to conclude that the Chechen ethical code of *konakhallah* which is described in detail by Ilyasov, differs from the others in that here the moral aspect is the basis for perfection. Every Chechen, irrespective of ethnicity or gender, can attain the highest degree of morality, which is *konakhallah*.

Developing moral character begins at the earliest stages of personal growth. Character is formed a primarily within the family, where its members act as the first socialisers and educators. The distinguishing feature of Chechen ethical code, *konakhallah*, is that it knows no class limitations. Every man who attains a certain moral ideal, and for whom the notion of honour and personal dignity is paramount, can become a *konakh*. This concept is often referred to in Chechen society when a woman is described as “къонах стар ю и” [*konakh stag yu i*]. *Konakh* is a historical phenomenon. No matter how times change, the requirements for being a *konakh* stay constant: he is a son of the nation, an ascetic, ready to sacrifice his own self-

interest for the people and the fatherland. One of the greatest sons of the Chechen people, A. Suleimanov, dedicated his entire life to studying folk culture and history. His art and elevated ideas were nourished by ethnic culture and folklore. That is why he wanted to see the incarnation of *konakh* moral qualities in every Chechen. Suleimanov's works reflect his spiritual quest, the impossibility of living apart from his people, from the land that nurtured him and from the sun that caressed his fatherland, Chechnya, so lovingly dearly. A. Suleimanov lived a praiseworthy life. He did not leave financial wealth, a staggeringly splendid house, or a family business behind, but he did leave the golden treasure of his inestimable thoughts which sprang from his poetic soul. He wrote about life, about people, about patriotism, about love. His poetry is understandable and close to everyone, regardless of their age and status. His poems are melodious and striking for their humanity. Suleimanov's language is immersed in folklore, and it leaves no one indifferent, it penetrates into the depths of one's soul and it amazes the reader with its sincerity. An excerpt from his poem "Shunyekh dosh" helps us understand how important the main purpose and meaning of human life is to Suleimanov. He lived as a *konakh* up to the end of his life, faithful to his word and his native land. That is why the concepts of *konakhallah* and *konakh* is congenial to him.

Къонаха мила, и мелац веа

ахъ соьга Шуънехъ 1аш вай.

дуьйне ду Къонахчун меа

Х1ар дуьйне м Къонахийн белшаш т1ехъ дай.

The author raises the question who is the *konakh* and how long does he live. The *konakh* is very dear to the world and the entire world rests on his shoulders. A. Suleimanov recognises the *konakh's* responsibility to his people and his country. In order to assume that responsibility, one ought to be prepared both physically and psychologically. The author notices the *konakh's* distinctive feature, i.e. his conscious, inner necessity to serve his people and fatherland. He expects no reward for this, neither in this world nor in the afterlife.

Traditional Chechen culture which forms the basis of A. Suleimanov's works, fosters the formation of courageous qualities from an early age, (first of all, in the family) tempering one's spirit and refining one's body. Z. Khasbulatova notes in her scientific works that Chechens had schools of courage to which their adolescent boys were sent (Khasbulatova, 2019). Teachers at such schools were authoritative middle-aged mujaheddin (warrior), who had not just socio-cultural experience, but also wisdom and intellect. Today, it is a regrettable fact that young people in their twenties and even older consider it possible for them to teach their elders. An analysis of the historical development of Chechen society shows that people of authority and experience from the village were always expected to resolve conflict situations or other disputes. These people had authority in their families, clans and villages. They were obliged to have a family, grown-up children who lived their lives with dignity and took care to preserve their father's honour of their. Furthermore, they had to have one of the key

characteristics that make up the core of *konakhallah*, namely, *sobar*, i.e. the restraint that lets one to steadily/calmly reach a compromise after listening to both sides.

In its historical development Chechen society went through many social and cultural crises, during which such essential qualities as *konakhallah* and *donnallah* made it possible for Chechens to preserve their identity, mentality and ethnic culture. Such crucial aspects of *konakhallah* as *donnallah*, *sobar*, *yakh* and endurance started in the family upbringing of Chechens since early childhood. These qualities are developed through such folk games as *Kozham bagor* and *Kuy billa vakhar* (Khasbulatova, 2019). There was also a custom in traditional Chechen upbringing culture, a test to be passed by youths when they reached the age of fifteen. The essence of these games is that the youths are were sent into the mountains and the forest, travelling on horseback carrying a weapon for a long time. They had to find sustenance for themselves and their horse, as well as defend themselves against danger in extreme conditions. In order not to chicken out but pass the test with dignity, the young man needed not only good physical training but also fortitude and, most importantly, the willpower. A. Aidamirov's novel "Long Nights" describes one of such episode, when shots were fired in broad daylight in the centre of the village. The people thought that the Tsar's soldiers had come again, but it turned out that they were shots fired in honour of the young men who had returned from the mountains.

In this context, A. Suleymanov writes about *sobar* endurance:

Кхонахий и собар кхачийчам бокъалла

Х1ар маълаха къай дуъине духар ма ду (in Chechen).

[If *sobar*, the *konakh*'s endurance, runs out, the world will collapse]

It is difficult to find a work in Suleymanov's oeuvre that is written merely for pleasure. Every word of Suleymanov, a master storyteller, is loaded and pierces the reader's soul like a bolt of lightning. He knows the price of freedom, which is so essential to all Chechens, and systematically reveals what the spirit is based on. He shows that a *konakh*'s greatness begins in the family and extends to the entire society and native land.

...Бертахъ доьзал, маърша даймохк

Беца къонахчун ши т1ам

\Къилло стагах къонах хилац

Юкъах герзаш дехкарах... (in Chechen).

...The freedom of the fatherland is one people.

These are the wings that make the *konakh* soar

A young man's abundance of armour's and formidable appearance

...cannot elevate him to the rank of a *konakh*...

A. Suleimanov reiterates that the *konakh's* word has always been a hundred times more valuable than his formidable appearance or his weapons. The *konakh's* word has become a law, a rule and an example to be imitated. At the same time, the author notes that the *konakh* is not alien to anything human: neither love, nor friendship, nor family. He, unlike others, understands and cherishes his roots, deeply senses the spirituality of his people, and is sensitive to their traditions and customs. His love and happiness he shares with others, not leaving anyone in need. He becomes a son for every mother who has lost her own son, a brother for every sister who weeps for her brother. This is the main character of A. Suleymanov's work.

A. Suleimanov was a versatile person. He loved music – singing folk songs [*illi*] playing the wooden instrument *dechig-pondur* – was fond of painting, admired Chechen literature, and was proud of his compatriots – writers and poets who developed Chechen literature. Z. Suleimanova, the poet's daughter, recalls, "In his moments of rest, my father used to sing songs to while playing his *dechig-pondur*. One of the songs deeply touched my soul with its drama and I was penetrated by the pain of parting with my beloved fatherland and it filled me with the bitterness of loss. When my father, sighing heavily, sang "Churt sanna, laitta so Gum-Azin arakh...", I noticed his eyes were moist and asked, "Are these your words?" "No, not mine," he said. "Whose are they?" I persisted. "They are the words of the Chechen poet M. S. Gadaev, who was repressed on false charges. But the truth will triumph..."

4. CONCLUSION

Chechen ethno-pedagogy consists of moral concepts which are basic in the formation of a growing person's world view, perception and attitude. Chechen national culture, its originality and uniqueness are reflected in literature. A. Suleimanov – the person citizen and thinker – understood and preached upbringing based on folk culture. He believed in using the pedagogical potential of folk culture in school education. A person oriented towards adhering to folk culture, customs and traditions is highly moral, and his spirituality is complete when achieving the rank of *konakh*.

Conflict of Interest

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest.

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