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ETHNOCULTURAL IMAGES IN POSTCOLONIAL PUBLICATIONS IN THE RUSSIAN-LANGUAGE PROSE OF THE KOREAN DIASPORA

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ABSTRACT: The literature of the Korean diaspora of the former Soviet Union combines the national characteristics of the Korean culture of the metropolis, the Korean national mentality, and at the same time reflects the historical realities and difficult, sometimes tragic fates of all peoples of the USSR and post-Soviet period. In this respect, the evolution of the literature of the Korean diaspora, leading from the prose in Korean to the first settlers from Korea to Sakhalin, was shown, which later were deported by Stalin's decree to Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. The literature of the Korean diaspora in Kazakhstan goes through all stages of the development of Soviet literature – from anti-Stalin prose, romanticized thaw literature and “quiet” stagnation prose, to postmodern and feminist literature. Moreover, Confucianism and Christian motives, Buddhism and Taoism, shamanism and Russian traditional literary images, motives, and themes are organically intertwined in the work of Russian and Kazakhstani Koreans. However, crosscutting issue through all the work of Korean writers who find themselves outside their homeland, it is an appeal to national identity, attempts to acquiring, preserving or tragedy and the pain of loss.

The literature of the Korean diaspora of the former Soviet Union countries combines the national characteristics of the Korean culture of the metropolis, the national Korean mentality, and at the same time reflects the historical realities and the difficult, sometimes tragic, fate of all the peoples of the USSR and post-Soviet period (Kim/Men 1995; Kim 1999; 2006). In this respect, the evolution of the Korean diaspora's literature, which has its origins in Korean from the first migrants from Korea to Sakhalin, who were later deported to Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan by Stalin's decree, is indicative (우정권, 임형모 2010; 이광일 2012; 이정선 2014; 강희진 2015; 김병학 2018; Literatura... 2019).

In this regard, the work of Khan Din (Khan De Yen) and especially his story “Fear” in K. Shishov' translation can be an example (Khan Din 1990, 6-29). According

to Vladimir Son, “Khan Din’s early story “Fear” stands out from his diverse and extensive works”. It is about how teacher Li, deported from Vladivostok, together with the Korean Pedagogical Institute, overcoming fear, saved the unique books of ancient Korean literature which were ordered to burn by the rector’s order in Kzyl-Orda. If he had fallen ..., he would have been punished, because the case “smelled” of politics from the rector-tyrant’s opinion. Noble Lee saved the priceless books, and they found their place in the National Library of Kazakhstan. The story is based on real events of the distant 1930.

- (1) “Fear” ends with a conclusion: a person can overcome fear if there is a strong spiritual core in him, and he cannot give up his conscience if his name and honor are dear to him. This is a triumph of the spirit! (Son 2002).

The story is built on a documentary basis, but there are a lot of symbolic images and details in it that require reference to the traditions of classical Korean literature and folklore (이명재 2002; 조규익 2012). For example, this is an image of a *bloody tornado* (*Devil’s wind*), symbolizing the blind destructive power of the Stalin era and fate in general.

Swallows and swallow nests mean the hero’s spiritual resurrection, awakening to a new life and hope. Swallow is a symbol of spring, goodness, happiness, hope, rebirth, home warmth, sunrise, beginning, positive transition, morning, etc. The swallow, arriving from beyond the sea, is connected with another world, with death, acts as an intermediary between death and life, a distant alien sea and near own land. In Christianity, to which many Koreans are committed, the swallow is a symbol of resurrection, since, returning with the arrival of spring, it brings a new life.

Books – a symbol of the memory of the people, their national identity. Saving the cultural memory of his people, lecturer Li gets rid of the fear of the Stalin’s regime, which has deprived him of communication with his people, parents, friends, because he symbolically shares his ethnic roots, the “collective intelligence” of his ethnic group. The image of fear, tormenting a small lonely defenseless Korean immigrant in front of a huge and blind state “machine-meat grinder”, expressed by physical metaphors, disappears as a result of spiritual involvement with the cultural values of his people.

A simple Russian peasant from the Cossacks, a freedom-loving, oppositional to Stalin’s and, in general, to any “monarchical” dictatorship person helps in the feat of saving the cultural heritage of Korean immigrants

The story “Kocho – bitter herb” by Lee Din, also a Korean migrant from the first generation, contains both genre signs of a legend and a parable (Lee 1990, 292-301). Legend usually tells a story of a hero who saves his people from disasters. The parable contains morality, which follows from a life situation told by an author. In the allegorical form, the author poses the most painful problem for the

Soviet / Stalin era – the person and the government, the person and the authority. This problem seems to be superimposed on the traditional Korean theme of the opposition of the people and officials, an honest person, a person of duty, a scientist, and a ruler who does not correspond to the Confucian commandments. As a result, a life path of such a hero is a hermit, a dialogue with nature, where he draws the missing harmony and learns the wise way of life. A traditional Korean hero chooses to serve his duty and purpose in solitude and rejection in the face of those in power.

Romantic influence on the Korean literature of the twentieth century provides in his works Mikhail Pak, who was born in North Korea and experienced a strong cultural influence of Soviet literature. According to N. O. Dzhuanyshbekov,

the fate of man and mankind at the turn of the XX-XXI centuries – the central theme of Mikhail Pak's works. The writer's appeal to it is due to his desire to find the cause of the negative phenomena occurring in society. Picturing in his works the most different people, revealing their characters and inner world, M. Pak is trying to understand why people with so much historical experience, who have great spiritual potential, sometimes commit cruel and terrible atrocities, the consequences of which have recently begun to threaten death to all mankind. The theme of death is opposed to the theme of love (2013, 66).

Pak's story "Beyond the threshold of nights" (1990, 76-127) is one of the most romantic masterpieces. It tells about the story of the tragic love of the driver Ilbo to an ordinary girl Oksun, who was poisoned by lazy and barren Menne because of the envy of Oksun's beauty. Her husbands left her all the time because of her grumpy temper and unworthy behavior, and she envied Ilbo and Oksun's family happiness.

The work is closely connected with the Korean cultural and literary traditions in the image of characters' representation and their author's assessment. The system of the characters is clearly divided into positive and negative. Positive character images are endowed with humanistic characteristics (kindness, responsiveness, connection with art, love for people, children, animals, external beauty), negative – greedy, envious, lonely, soulless, even outwardly repelling and other characteristics.

Images of nature and home description of the characters are also a means of characterizing the character row.

Traditionally for Korean literature, the theme of the hermit, the main character Ilbo, is revealed, which is connected with his rejection of an unjust human society. The image of Menne is particularly interesting, evolving into a story on the model of Christian repentance and forgiveness.

The image of the dog – Cholak – symbolizes the child that is absent in Ilbo's life in accordance with Russian and world literature (parallel with I. Turgenev's story "Mumu"); and it is the dog that becomes the hero's first hold on life, awakens him from depression caused by the loss of his beloved wife.

One more symbolic detail is valuable for the disclosure of the artistic intent of the story– an ear ring in the form of a ring, presented to Ilbo by the Gypsies. The Gypsies in literature symbolize not only freedom, asceticism, but also the image of fate, the “ring of fate”, as if predicting Ilbo’s return to society.

The image of fate, predestination is especially important for the Korean cultural tradition, so Ilbo’s encounter with the filmmaker Ladyshev (a person from the world of art) and teacher Lina (an image associated with humanism and love for children, usually symbolizing a happy future in literary works) is not accidental.

Mikhail Pak’s works unites the idea that love is the “border” connecting two worlds expressed by Pak in his story “Beyond the threshold of nights”. When a man loves and his beloved is near, he is happy, and when he loses his love, his life becomes hopeless, meaningless. Love can be regained only by learning to love the people around again, as Ilbo did in M. Pak’s work (Dzuanishbekov 2013, 67).

Alexander Kan, the author of the novel “Candidate,” reveals another fundamental and very painful topic for the Korean diaspora – isolation from national and cultural roots, half-heartedness, borderline of national identity. Kahn himself in his essay “The Bridge (History of one attraction)” annotates the content of the story:

The hero of the story, a physicist, junior researcher, writes a PhD dissertation (a thesis), a project of his dreams, living in a family with a young wife, – Of course, it is not easy, especially since a child was born, so he works at night, in a narrow room of the toilet. Moreover, his mother-in-law, while making her night patrols around the apartment, every now and then turns off the light in the toilet so as not to waste energy, which is known to turn on outside, but our hero somehow copes with it while suffering. And so it goes through the long months of his hard night classes. In the end, he presents his dissertation to his supervisor. He is very happy – he did it, everything came together! But after some time, the hero with horror found out that his brilliant work was given to another PhD student. How? What for? And then that in the USSR, especially in the Asian republics, there was such a monstrous practice: mediocrity, idlers and crooks, but equipped with rich parents, embezzled alien talented works for obtaining a scientific degree. But the talents in public, as usual, were silent, while alone with themselves they violently reflexed. In the end, our hero, who has a fragile psyche, especially against the background of eternal squabbles with his wife and mother-in-law over money, locks himself in his toilet at night and becomes crazy (Kan 2004, 421).

The story “The Candidate” expresses the theme of borderland, the psychological trauma of the oriental half-breed, who is cut off from his national and related roots (Kan 1990, 127-216). It was the circumstance that “derailed” the lives of many characters in the story – the orphanage parents of the protagonist, the “fragments” of their unknown family, the protagonist himself and his friend – the fatherless

Korean with low self-esteem and the impossibility of joining any group, the inability to fully take place in the role of a student, a talented scientist, father, as it were, the initial marginality of fate.

This blood mixing, which in the Eastern mentality is often recognized as a flaw and a violation of traditions and rules, a violation of “blood purity”, makes the hero unacceptable for himself, as he does not tolerate the chaos of uncertainty, does not tolerate the “spoiled mechanism” with his defective national identity. Even talent does not save, if a person does not have reliable support in his ancestral roots. A man without birth sources does not pass initiation, cannot take a worthy place in society, become a good husband and father, and the only way out for him is to die. A long dark corridor and a small restroom, an analogue of a coffin, become the prototype of death long before the real death of Heraclius and his Korean friend, who devoted his life to the search for his father as a fundamental starting point in destiny. Such a plot of reverse knowledge, predestination, signs of destiny is common in classical Korean literature.

Korean life is impossible outside its society, without determining its tribal affiliation. This existential problem of the Korean-half-blooded loneliness outside its collectivist nation is superimposed on the theme of the social injustice of the Soviet type with the venal and hypocritical science, leveling the uniqueness of the scientist’s personality. This contradiction is inherent at all levels of poetics: the desire for uniqueness (the rare name Heraclius) and the craving for the collective and at the same time the rejection of the Soviet takeover (figurative surname Shesternin, it means “a gear, a cog”).

Andrey Khan’s story “The Province” is already a typical postmodern text of the late 80s and early 90s of the 20th century, the heyday of postmodern poetics (Khan 1990, 216-291). “Soviet” writers with Korean roots at the end of the twentieth century are introduced to the newest literary movement, which originated in American culture and is cosmopolitan in its essence. They stop to be focused only on their national problems and the trauma of forced emigration and are included in the globalized world cultural processes.

In particular, there is a lot of intertext (hidden quotations) in this story, since the postmodern text is focused on the elite reader, who is able to learn the veiled quotes from I. Brodsky, A. Kushner, N. Gumilyov, M. Tsvetaeva, etc.

There is also a lot of experimentation with art form, especially with style. The text is thickly metaphorical, as if it was a form of poetry, not prose. The plot outline is surrealistically broken, since postmodernism sees the world as an absurd anti-system, like chaos, because from this point of view the world is fundamentally unknowable. This is symbolically expressed in the image of the blind main character.

Postmodernism introduces themes into culture that were formerly forbidden in Soviet literature – these are themes of physical and mental illness, declassification of characters, and accented physiology. So a new direction is mastering

a new material, there is a development of literature, which is trying to respond to completely different requests for reality – the “bad” time, depression, transition crisis of the end of the twentieth century in the post-Soviet countries.

The protagonist is mad, but schizophrenia is recognized as the main disease of the 21st century by modern philosophers, and the interest in a different way of thinking in literature and culture is particularly relevant. The madman’s mentality contains truth and freedom from society with its banal order and violence against the person. This story overlaps with the following works of Russian postmodernism as “Life with an idiot” by Viktor Yerofeyev, “School for Fools” by Sasha Sokolov, “Blue Fat” by Vladimir Sorokin and the modernist novels by J. Joyce, F. Kafka, W. Faulkner, etc.

Anatoliy Kim’s works take a special place in the literature of the Korean diaspora of the post-Soviet countries. A. Kim, the most famous Korean writer of Kazakhstan and Russia, was born in Shimkent, Kazakhstan. He went to Moscow, studied there and taught at the Literary Institute. His works of art hardly made their way into print during the period of stagnation, being examples of underground prose, not fitting into realistic aesthetics. His work is called mythological realism, as the Kim heroes can speak with the spirits of the dead, rise from the dead, be reborn into the body of animals or plants.

- (2) The happy birds of the whole world and the waves of all the oceans are nothing for me; the bright showers of spring light fall, tearing into shreds the shroud of white snow are nothing for me. My son came to visit me – from the world of the living stretched an even footprint to me, threw a blue necklace of his tracks on clean drifts! (Kim 1983, 488).

For the Soviet reader with a European mentality, the artistic world of Kim, relying on Buddhism and shamanism, was strange and often caused misunderstanding and even rejection. Kim was especially unlucky with the reception in Soviet criticism. Criticism has long been helpless in front of his revelations, because it did not largely coincide with the European mentality. The novel “Belka” was denied printing several times (Kim 1984). In the scandalous story of Kim “Lotos”, the artist Lokhov is experiencing a love meeting at the bedside of a dying mother. This love scene caused horror and disgust in Soviet readers, while its significance in the aspect of the Buddhist worldview was absolutely innocent. If one soul leaves this world, another soul, a small child, must come to this world to replace the outgoing one. In the Russian-language Korean literature of Kazakhstan and Russia, Kim also presents postmodern literature primarily from the late period of his work with his series of philosophical novels.

There is feminist prose with its purely feminine theme and imagery in the literature of a Korean diaspora. She is represented by Henrietta Kan with the story

“The Cycle” (Kan 1990, 170-192) and a number of dramatic works. The story of the famous Kazakhstani playwright Kan “The Cycle” is built on the basis of dramatic principles but based on realistic poetics (with a large number of dialogues, like author remarks explaining the character of the heroes and the motives of their actions, mobile scene change, energetic plot and effective decoupling) and is dedicated to theatrical life and theatrical image “behind the scenes”. This work is from the so-called Korean “women’s prose”, which most clearly manifested itself in the post-Soviet 1990s, describing the vicissitudes of women’s fate, winning a worthy place in the modern literary process and society. The story in this regard can be put on a par with theatrical works and prose of Russian writer Lyudmila Petrushevskaya, who also focuses her artistic attention on the image of a woman, her little worries and problems, her fate, obeying natural rock, her natural needs, unconsciously submitting to instincts, who cannot analyze her psychological state, limply obeying the flow of life carrying it.

In this aspect, Kan’s heroine Lera Lee is a typical image for this literary era. The writer shows her feminine evolution: in her youth she falls in love with the theatrical world and theatrical actor, since art is a textbook of life, a “pre-flight” training for a future life. The image of her husband, the genius actor, is given, on the one hand, in the common European tradition – as an “eternal child”, and, on the other hand, in the Russian tradition – as a loser, “not enduring the well-being”. This perspective of the image of a creative person – an indispensable loser – is especially common for the literature of the so-called “seventies”, in which Kim is considered to be a cohort. These are the so-called “odd people” who do not want to participate in the life race, are more victims than predators who cannot adapt to the era of stagnation with its hypocrisy, aggressive mediocrities-opportunists, etc. “We are the lowest», – wrote a representative of this literary generation Andrei Sinyavskiy, emphasizing the positive character of the hero – a social outsider. According to the Kazakhstani researcher A. Mashakova, “The leitmotif of the story ‘Cycle’ is a revolt of the dignity of the man-creator, the ruler of the scene against mediocrity” (Mashakova 2013, 79).

However, to support such an outsider and devote his life to a woman, especially a pragmatic Korean, is not always a feasible and correct life strategy. Husband-child – unnatural model of a man in marriage. His marriage with the actor Lera feels like a state of illness, a painful growth. And only in relations with Kolesov she feels truly happy, falling under the protection of the wise and reliable “breeder” of her internal growth. However, this is only a temporary state of her soul. It is not by chance that the name of the hero “Kolesov” (in Russian it means “a circle”, “a cycle”) corresponds with the title of the story “Cycle”. Reminiscence from the Bible clarifies the essence of their relationship – this is only passion, another passion in the life of a woman, only part of the wheel of her fate. It is not by chance that Kolesov never divorces his wife. And the destiny punishes lovers

for their lawless relationship. Kolesov dies from a heart attack. “What will happen to Lera now?” Her former husband and eternal child Oleg Lee wondered remotely. The answer to this question is contained in the concept of the fate of a woman in the prose of the writer – a representative of the literature of the Korean diaspora in Kazakhstan – all stages of women’s fate must be passed and played.

One more remarkable author of the period of the colonial literature of Kazakhstan is Lavrentiy Son. The story “The Area of the Triangle” describes the typical Korean character, revealing in the conditions of the deportation trauma. The little nameless Korean woman, hardworking and responsible seamstress, who survived all the horrors of the Stalin era, firmly believes in her rituals of taking clothing measures (“magic tricks to take measurements”, see: Son 1990, 73), bringing good people happiness and well-being, and bad people giving according to their merit.

- (3) Here is a little secret, which I invite you to unravel. And for a start I will inform the following. If a mother sews a handkerchief of a neighbour girl who has a flu, she recovers; if she builds trousers for Vaska who is held back a year, he will master the program of the third class and move on to the fourth; if the working dressing-gown of the master of the heavy engineering is done (and the master is in bad count with the bosses), then his affairs will get better and everyone will begin to understand that he is an excellent worker and person; if a suit is sewn to a commercial agent, our Soviet one, the merchant will certainly conclude a successful contract with the German company for the supply of equipment; if they fulfill the order of young people to sew fashionable suits and dresses, they do not change in curved mirrors, as we have already seen ... (Son 1990, 63).

There are a lot of kinds of rituals and amateur prayers in the text, since the Korean soul requires divine protection, especially – in such alarming and dangerous times.

- (4) Let’s say together a prayer-spell to the Most High, who so mocked the old master ... O heaven! Why are you so unkind and heartless to the bearer of rare magic, a skillful tailor, mother, that you, elevating the master to the top of the eternal triangle, plunged to its base, where the forces of envy and ill overcame truth and love; after all, life should go on without a tailor, without a mother, why are the fines and taxes imposed by talent and miracles so powerful, what forces drive the conveyor of silent humiliations, as you allowed small right is recognized even more minor, and the big one is blind in heart blindness, deprived of complacency and long-suffering, and you have an intention to raise the master to the throne, will your bitter smile of despair disappear from his mother’s face? (Son 1990, 74).

According to Y. Kristeva (2004, 256), focusing on the symbolism of numbers serves to protect identity, which is subject to the risks of loss. Therefore, the extension to the magic number as a kind of deity who knows both the past and the future

becomes an attempt by Korean settlers to solve the problems of adaptation in an alien society, retaining, above all, their national identity and reducing anxiety and insecurity in the Soviet country.

Lavrentiy Son's main heroine, a small Korean woman, seems to be starting her personal meditative deity – a unique, magical combination of numbers – magical clothing measures, the embodiment of her relationship to good and evil, which not only gives her a sense of identity realization that goes back to the Korean mentality (a necessary condition for self-affirmation any person), but also reliably protects against the particular evil and danger addressed to her. This is how emigrant-neurotic is only capable of dealing with its own discreteness and dispersion of the surrounding reality in order to preserve the remnants of mental health and national identity (Safronova 2015, 60).

The collection of stories “Lunar calendar pages” by writers-members of Korean diaspora in CIS, which became the main material of our research, wasn't published by accident in 1990, at the beginnings of postcolonial epoch. The collection includes creations with the theme of protest, which was obvious or mostly hidden, which is more typical for the east behavior type. First of all, these creations are in the anti-Stalinist and anti-authoritarian direction, which were written by natives of North Korea Lee Din and Khan Din. Their puny, physically weak, bodily small characters were devoted to their nation and work, despite fatal threat proceeded from the power of wealthy people. The image of an old woman seamstress from L. Son's story “The square of triangle” was in the same type, the type of the victim of Stalinist mode. Because of despair and exposure, she invented her own religion. Also there are Ilbo, the main character of Pak's story “Beyond the threshold of nights”, who was typical Korean recluse character with romantic idealizations. He was expressing his protest against imperfections of reality without any aggression, but with depression.

The character of Kan's story “Candidate”, Irakliy Shesternin, was half-breed, the product of multinational Soviet incubator, loser in all kind of things, “eternal candidate”, who didn't have any kind of inner core things due to fuzzy national identity. Therefore he wasn't a strong character, who was able to insist on his own ideas. That's why he was just a small screw of the whole system, built on the Soviet hierarchical principle, when the chief can do everything.

The idea of the lost identity and its consequences, declassification, madness was brought to absurdity in Andrey Khan's postmodernist story “Province”. Khan's character-madman finds freedom from the society in his inner world while in reality he was living in the poor conditions of the basement room.

Kim's characters-painters from “Lotus” and “Squirrel” were foreign in the Soviet atheistic society, because they believed in reincarnation, ghosts, professed zen-buddhism, denied death. They believed not in revolution, but in social evolution.

It's better to set all of the characters with creative personalities from the stories of Korean CIS writers to another group. Actually, they were always children, unsettled, unlucky, marginal, who didn't want to participate in the life race, mostly madmen. According to Kim's thoughts, all of them are the guests from the future, the favorable to live on the Earth time isn't there for them.

Kan's feminists are also falling out of the Soviet context, living a tumultuous female evolution, finding themselves more stylish and viable than their men.

Thus, we can conclude that the literature of the Korean diaspora of the USSR and then the Commonwealth of Independent States goes through all the stages of the formation of Soviet literature – from anti-Stalin prose, romanticized literature and “quiet” stagnation prose to postmodern and feminist literature. Moreover, Confucianism and Christian motifs, Buddhism and Taoism, shamanism and Russian traditional literary images, themes are quite organically intertwined in the works of Russian and Kazakh Koreans. However, a cross-cutting theme through all the work of Korean writers who find themselves outside their homeland is an appeal to national identity, an attempt to attain it, save it, or the pain of loss. As well as a hidden but constant protest, an emphasized difference, the strangeness of Korean characters in Soviet society.

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