

THE MYTHOLOGICAL IMAGE OF SHURALEN AND ITS REFLECTION IN THE FOLKLORE OF VOLGA-URAL REGION

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ABSTRACT

Shuraleh is an ancient mythical image kept in folklore. Owing to the man's image this fictional character occurs frequently in folklore as myths and fairy tales of the Volga and Ural people. The image is given in a special way in each nation's folklore. Having common features they also have differences, directly related to people's national mentality. The main purpose of our work is to make an analysis of the character h or similar images in the Volga-Ural region folklore works and to show the peculiarities as well.

Keywords: *Shurale, folklore, the Volga and Ural people*

INTRODUCTION

ORIGIN AND MEANING OF THE WORD SHURALEH

According to the connection of a low spirit and the image of Shuraleh there were different opinions in the science regarding to the origin of the word. For example, the ancient Turkish word “*sher*” meant an “evil” and “harm”. Scientists suppose that the word Shuraleh is derived from the words “*sher*” and “*el*” alongside with suffix “*leh*”. “*Sher-el-leh*” or “puckish hands” [1]. In this case, people emphasize that Shuraleh likes tickling people with his long fingers and therefore this ‘game’ can hurt people. G. Gilmanov offers to find the similarity of the word origin Shuraleh and Chuvash folklore image Arsuri in the ancient Turkic folklore and to associate the etymology of the word “evil” with the components of “*sür*” (“*sur*”, “*shur*”).

METHODOLOGY

The problem of the relation of the national literatures and folklore, including the interliterary reception of the Volga region people is traditionally regarded by the Comparative Literary studies, the founder of which was A.N. Veselovsky. The writings of M.P.Alekseev, V.M.Zhirmunsky, N.I.Konrad, I.G.Neupokoeva developed the basic theoretical propositions of the domestic comparative literary analysis [2; 3].

In a study of the folklore and literary connections of the Volga region people the typological approach to the study, based on the concepts of “general typological series” and “literary era” introduced into scientific circulation by I.G.Neupokoeva is dominated [3].

Typological study suggests, first of all, determining the conditions of occurrence and development of the homogeneous folklore literary phenomena and processes. This type of research has allowed Kazan literary critics, linguists and cultural researchers as R.R.Zamaletdinov, V.R.Amineva, F.G.Galimullin, A.F.Galimullina, L.I.Mingazova, R.K.Ganieva, L.S.Karabulatova, O.N.Korshunova, S.M.Mikhailova, R.F.Mukhametshina, E.F.Nagumanova, Yu.G.Nigmatullina, A.M. Sayapova, F.S.Safiullina, A.Sh.Yusupova, consider the language, folklore and literary relationship in the context of the system-integrated study of languages, literature and art, in the frame of the integration of studies of humanities and social sciences, in the context of interaction with the conceptual studies, methodologies and research techniques peculiar to various fields of social science [4-11].

Thus, the basis of our research of the folklore interaction of the people of the Volga region became comparative-historical, comparative-typological, comparative and functional, subjective and mythological methods that allow us to do a comparative and qualitative analysis of the artistic text itself and reveal its intercultural (interliterary) relationships taking into account time verticals to determine the typological similarity with other pieces of literary fiction. We focus on M.M.Bakhtin’s theory of the dialogue between cultures as a form of their existence in the big time, during which the culture and literature of every nation, ethnic group becomes one of the participants in the dialogue with other cultures, as a result of which new meanings and forms are being formed [12].

THE MAIN BODY

THE ORIGIN OF THE MYTHOLOGIC IMAGE OF SHURALEH. ITS FAMILY

It would be a remarkable coincidence the origin of the names of forest creations, which are related to folklore, like Shuraleh (the similar creations are Leshiy (‘Wood spirits’), Yarimtiq, Arsury (Arsüry), Aleeda (Nyulesmurt, Palesmurt), Viryava (Targylytysh) are connected with various ancient beliefs of different nations.

It is known ancient people believed in existence of some unusual creatures as well as all creatures and things have their own souls. This belief was kept in many folklore works, primitive fables, different beliefs and animistic worldview. For example, such imaginations as wind, thunderstorm, the sun, forests and mountains are animated and therefore there are legends, stories, fairy tales about their mystic force and endless abilities. Hence, due to the origin of half-zoomorphic and half-anthropomorphic Shuraleh has far animistic worldview period origin: at that time people perceive a forest as a holistic and alive organism. After a while the forest was identified in zoomorphic appearance and later in anthropomorphic one. Therefore, there is a half-zoomorphic and half-anthropomorphic image of the King of a Forest (“Forest devil”, “Forest Sheep”).

There are different opinions and views on Shuraleh’s origin in folklore of Volga and Ural nations but at the same time they have similar features and ideas: Shuralehs are “the souls of people who died unnaturally and not buried according to their traditional funeral and memorial rituals” [13]. For example, “in the Mari mythology Targylytysh is a one-eyed spirit of a person who had an unnatural death” [14].

Due to these beliefs, many people’s forbid to bury people in the cemetery, who died not with their own death. The people believed that, turning into evil, creatures, souls of such people were obliged to wander in the forests, lakes and wells, and the earth didn’t accept them: “After the Christianization of Mordvinians there was a legend that Vir-Av (Viryava) didn’t turned up from egg, that laid on the world

tree: forest spirits were people accursed by God, – neither earth nor sky did not take them” [14]. At the same time, according to the beliefs of individual nations, Leshiy (‘wood spirits’) “...are born from the marriage of devil with an earthly witch, and sometimes from men who have committed a serious crime” [14]. There are also other legends about origins: “Wood spirits, merman, hobgoblins and other spirits descended from the armies of Satan, who was overthrown by God on the earth”, and etc. [14]. For instance, “Only God and the devil were on the earth. God created a man as well as the devil tried to create one but he couldn’t form a man only the devil. ... God found out that the devil had created several devils; he became angry with him and ordered the Archangel Gabriel to overthrow Satan and all the evil spirits from the sky. Gabriel obeyed him. The evil spirit, who fell in the forest, became a wood spirit, who was in the water, became a merman, who appeared in the house became a hobgoblin” [15].

In Bashkir folklore the origin of Yarimtiq has a very simple origin: “Yarimtiq, who lived in our village, was a man. Being bewitched, he could not come back home; he ate a variety of herbs and therefore he turned into Yarimtiq. Hornless. Naked man. Without fur” [16].

In fairy tales and myths Shuraleh lived in a family and he had his own children: “Shuralehs live in the dark shadowy forests... they lived collectively as family members” [13]. In the matter of engagement, in several fairy tales of Volga-Ural region nation there are some reveal motifs of an engagement of a man and Shuraleh’s girl or a marriage of woman and Shuraleh. Beginning to compare these types of works from ancient time we can notice some disappering of mythological strength of the Shuraleh’s image and the passage a human “century fear” of Shuraleh. “Vir-itya led girls and women away into woods, but at the same time Vir-itya decoyed the man and could have their common children” [14]. Based on the view that the children were born from the marriage of a female and Shuraleh could have the aptitude to do good deals, Shuraleh’s image is ambivalent in some legends: “Vir-itya (Viryava) could help out a lost man from a forest and could kill by tickling till his death» [14]. In the Chuvash folklore, namely in a fairy tale about Mamaldyk Arsuri has positive character and good qualities. (Mamaldyk was used as a male name in the Chuvash nation. L.M.). After the events which are typical for fairy tales, Arsuri saved Mamaldyk from death and said about his future: he would get married to Arsuri’s daughter. True divination is obtained: “Mamaldyk kept going further and now he had already reached his future father-in-law Arsuri. Seeing Mamaldyk, Arsuri was delighted and took his daughter to him as his bride and they celebrated their wedding without delay” [17]. At the end of the fairy tale we know about happy family life of Mamaldyk and Arsuri’s daughter. The similar motif can be found in the Udmurt folklore. But the outcome is otherwise: a hunter Imanai fell in love with Alida and married her. Starting to live together, she forgot about her mother Alida’s words that she was a representative of another world. Eventually, Alida could not live away among people and pass away [18].

The folklore of the Volga and Ural nation has stories with similar motives about marriage and having a family of Shuraleh, but there are different stories at the same time. For example, it seems unreal Shuraleh visiting the village having an aim to get married to his sweetheart. But there is alike motive in Russian fairy tale “The Leshy” (‘Wood-goblin’) and it has the following interpretation: “... he was dressed in gentry boots, a red shirt, a coat and all of this appearance was like as a real merchant or a clerk from the Peter. He opened his wallet and there was a lot of money that would be enough to cover the whole village. There was his brother, his mother and all other relatives, that’s why it was as a wedding ceremony” [19]. After their leaving six weeks passed and the girl who disappeared that day came back at night for a moment only to return her cross to her father. She said that she had a happy life, but any prayer was forbidden.

In this passage let’s have a look at the Mari fairy tale “Targylytysh and a man”: “Targylytysh and his mother, who was a She-devil, live in that lake” [20]. There are two important moments. Firstly, the mother of Targylytysh is called a She-devil. Secondly, Targylytysh’s place of residence, he lives in water. The previous tradition is also continued and developed in this fairy tale: the person is smarter than

Targylytysh and his mother – She-devil: the man is more clever and intelligent than Targylytysh and his mother – She-devil. They do not understand of Mari man's tricks and as a result they presented a lot of gold and silver as a treasure and let him go away.

Thereby there are different opinions on Shuraleh's origin, family and engagement in the works of Volga and Ural region people. But in each of them has a significant opinion on their mythological origin based on their close connections.

SHURALEH'S APPEARANCE, PLACE OF LIVING

To show Shuraleh's appearance, image the myths and fairy tales of Volga and Ural region append and supplement each other or color with new features or replicate one another. Despite the famous scientist and folklorist of Tatar people F. Urmanche wrote in one of his works: "Due to the folklore materials Shuraleh's appearance is alike a man" [21], in the folklore of Tatar people and Volga – Ural region nationalities this hero is often given as woman: "...the body is like a woman body, hair is short, but it has bristle, with breast on the shoulder" [22], "To his surprise the old man saw a girl – Shuraleh, sitting on a horse. They say, her hair was dissolved, there was a horn on her forehead, she was ugly and plain with big beasts», etc. [22]. «A strange, shaggy woman appeared there. And the girl understood that it was a hostess of forest – Viryava» [23].

According to aforesaid examples, Shuraleh's appearance is like human's one and he or she could speak as a man. He has long arms. When he walks on the forest his arms touch his knees and reach his knees. There is no fur on his fingers at all but his fingers have wrinkles all around. Shuraleh's body is hairy or naked, his head is small, his eyes are big, sometimes his ears are very long, and his beasts always hang down. He is skinny and tall and therefore it is difficult to see him among trees. But in spite of all "...he is like a man and has only some differences as long finger, long and hard fingers, breast is like a bag. She put her breast on the shoulder" [14].

As a feature or a peculiarity of the Tatar mythological stories and fairytales, we can notice Shuraleh's big breasts. Kayym Nasiri paid his attention to it in the 19th century. In his work "The origin of beliefs and customs in the Kazan Tatars life appeared besides the influence of the Islam religion" he writes: "Shuraleh is like Leshy ('Wood-goblin') in Russian. Shuraleh has very big breasts, he puts one breast on the right shoulder and he puts the second one on the left shoulder" [24]. This image is like with the description of Viryava, an image in Mordovian folklore: "When he sleeps, he puts his breasts under his head" [14].

The Chuvash name "Arsuri" means "a half man". However, there is another name "U pate" which means "monkey". "Arsuri" is represented in various appearances: as a human (a usual man, gray-bearded old man, the giant) or as an animal" [25].

In this case, there is ambiguous attitude of Udmurt people to Alide. "Alida is the essence of male and female in a huge size: when they go on the grass, they become in the length of the grass, and when they run through forests, they are as high as trees" [26]. In some version they claim "he has only one leg and this leg is topsy-turvy, he has one big eye and a great breast which he presses into people mouth and chokes them" [26]. In Russian folklore "Leshy ('Wood-goblin') has a length as grass or as a pine trees and usually it is a man, who wears his coat wrapped up to the right side and he puts his shoes on the wrong way; He is similar to a man, but he is covered with hair from head to toe" [19].

As it was noticed, despite Shuraleh is given in human appearance (walking on two legs, can talk, etc) he has also animal qualities: he is covered with hair from head to toe, he has a tail, he often has a horn, and lives in the woods, etc.

As Shuraleh the common names of forest mythological creatures of Chuvash, Bashkir and Udmurt people as Arsuki, Yarimtiq, Alida are related to one meaning – half. For example E.A.Enderov writes, “The word *arsuri* has different phonetic variants, *ar – duri* (ar-sori), *ar – dirj* (ar-sorri), etc. As we see, it consists of two components: *ar* means “a man” and *surri* means “a half”, that means “a half man”, in other words half and half, etc.” [27]

It is known that the substances, who has only a half body, one hand, one leg, are related to mythology of most nations. Speaking on Tatar Shuraleh, the scientist L.Mingazova considers, “in the last epoch his “halfness” has almost disappeared and only his unicorn hints resemble us his former appearance... According to intellectual development and a new world view on ancient ideas, a forest devil changed from half into whole” [28]. Continuing and developing this point of view it would be interesting to give an example of R.Ahmetyanov’s observations. In his opinion, the historical bases of appearing of legends about halves were a forest tribe, which have a custom of tattooing the half body [29].

Meeting with the Shuraleh. There are many different fairy tales as “The Invisible Clothing of Targylytysh” in Mari people folklore. A plot of them is very simple: one Mari man went on a hunt. There he met Targylytysh, killed him, and take away his skin. A little bit later, he realized that the skin of Targylytysh was magic: if something touches the skin, it would become invisible. Because of this magic skin, Mari gained lots of money and became wealth but that posh life did not last long. Targylytysh’s friends decided to take revenge and set fire to Mari wealth.

As a general rule, stories of different folklores tell us that meetings with Shuraleh had always grief failure and bad endings. Also in Tatar folklore Shuraleh has only a purpose to bring people only misfortune and trouble: “When Shuraleh sees humans, meets people, he asks them for playing the tickle-tickle game with him and in the end of the game he tickles them to death [22].

According to certain beliefs, even if Man could escape from this Shuraleh with ruse, he would bite the dust: fell to failure or death. Maybe it is the main reason why the Shuraleh and creatures like him have quite negative image in various mythological stories of Tatar, Mari, Russian, Udmurt, Bashki, and Mordovian folklore. However, with the passage of time humans have realized that Shuraleh is not sophisticated creature. Thinking them superior to it, they learned ways of getting rid of him and absolutely lost sense of fear of him. For example, there is a rule when you face Shuraleh: do not show him your teeth. He might think that you are laughing and he can start to tickle you and play with you. In addition, he endlessly asks questions so you can get rid of him only by asking any question yourself. It is necessary to go to a forest only with a dog because Shuraleh is deathly afraid of a dog. Also they say that he is afraid of whips and rods, salt, water and the word “bitter”. He has got quite big breasts and that’s why the skin under them is keeping raw. If you sprinkle this place with salt, he will die without any doubt. So people in the forest always repeat the phrase “give me some bitterness” to frighten the Shuraleh. [13].

In addition there is motive of Islam in Tatar mythological tale “Shuraleh”. This story is about a greybeard, who lost his way in the forest because of calling of Shuraleh. But there are some differences: the greybeard does not return home for a long time, and his old wife invites Mullah to read a prayer for her husband soul and gave a vow if he came back alive, she would make a sacrifice. On the second day the greybeard comes back white as death [23]. Apparently, such motive appeared because of influence of Islam and the religion laws in Tatar tales. Also there is a motive of Christianity, for example, an old man met a wood-goblin’s family eating porridge in the middle of forest and guessed that it was a leshy (‘wood-goblin’), and reads the Jesus prayer and the spirits disappeared [19]. So there is a motive of “weakness” forest mythological creature in comparison with a man. All in all there is frequent stories with the same ending, but without connection with a religion. For example, there are fairy-tales “Perya

Hercules” in Mordvian folklore, “Leshy and Soldier” in Russia folklore. These fairy tales have also a motive of Shuraleh “weakness” in the foreground.

Perya Hercules has an opponent Viryava, who has “a huge head that can be seen above the trees”, when he sleeps “the needles are falling off, and his nose sparks fire” If Perya Hercules won Viryava with simple tricks, the fairy tale “Leshy and Soldier” has an interesting and unusual plot and conflict solving. The soldier visited the house where Leshy lived and decided to sleep there: “...suddenly, a man of the medium height in white clothes entered the house.” Starting to speak to him, the soldier realized that it was the Leshy and decided to have a trick on him, keeping talking to him. “We never die, but only walk in the forest, visit houses. But, if at her is a needle and it sticks into our leg, we will die”, the Leshy says: “You can have fifteen harness horses and but they can never take out our bodies. But tying a hen and cock on wisp, frighten them and they will carry us away; if wind blows, nothing will be.” Later, the soldier used this information to win the Leshy.

In this way, we can say that Shuraleh has represented in two images. On the one hand, he is frightful, strong; on the other hand it is narrow-minded naive. He believes in everything and therefore it has a second name “Forest sheep”.

CONCLUSION

So, Shuraleh is a complicated, syncretic, variable image, which was created owing to people perception of the world. The creation of this image is connected with our ancestors adopting the world as alive and trying to understand their existence.

SUMMARY

The image of such mythic character as Shuraleh and similar images are very popular in the folklore of the peoples living along the Volga and Ural. They have different description. In the beginning Shuraleh initially embodied the spiritualized forces of nature, namely, the spirit and the owner of the forest. Sooner this character was represented in zoomorphic and anthropomorphic direction. The cult of unnatural death also played an important role in forming the image of Shuraleh.

In the folklore of Volga and Ural peoples Shuraleh was given in two aspects. On the one hand, it is a dangerous, strong mythic character; on the other hand, it is a very narrow-minded and naive viewed hero, who can be cheated easily. Such contradictions led to loose of some features in the image of Shuraleh (e.g. a rude, dangerous image) and to have new characteristic peculiarities. There is an important point of view as an advantage of human being in comparison with mythological images and therefore dominance of a man in contrast with Shuraleh.

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