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Symbols of Women's Jewelry in Altai Literature

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Abstract: The article is devoted to the study of traditional women's jewelry in Altai literature and its symbols as a crucial part of the people's material culture within the evolutionary process. This examination is carried out in close connection with the socio-economic structure, natural and climatic conditions, and religious-mythological beliefs. In this regard, women's jewelry possesses the essential properties of the world and contains all the most important symbols functions. To revive the ethnic self-awareness of the younger generation, Altai poets turn to national images of objects (jylamash, jinji, cheedek, shikshirge, tana, sakusin) in their works.

Keywords: Altai literature, poets, imagery, jewelry, worldview.

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Introduction

The worldview of every people contains universal, specific, and unique ethnic features that unite the people and, at the same time, distinguish them from others. Returning to the origins of one's own culture is a necessary part of realizing one's ethnic national identity and uniqueness. Society is increasingly interested in its roots, and broad segments of the population are learning more about their traditions and customs. In this regard, scholars worldwide are studying the issue of traditional culture. This is because the importance of ethnic manifestations in the social sphere is growing in every society. Throughout its existence, human civilization has shaped the uniqueness of each ethnic group. This is most fully reflected in national costumes as unique works of applied folk art.

The works of Altai poets contain many exoticisms and ethnographisms, which in turn enhance the national flavor of their works. "Exoticisms are the national names of everyday objects, household utensils, clothing, customs, and rituals of a particular people, a particular country" [Dibrova 2004; 311].

This article focuses on the use by Altai poets of knowledge of the customs and traditions of their people, details of costume and jewelry. They are especially noticeable in the poems of Anchy Samunov, for example, "Altai Enege" ("Altai Mother"), "Torko Chachak" ("Silk Tassel"), "Tana" ("Mother-of-Pearl Button"), "Kuyka Topchy" ("Decorative Button"), "Shikshirge" ("Hair Plait

Ornament"), "Sakusyn" ("Ornamental Plaques"), "Tarak" ("Comb"), "Kongo Syrga" ("Pendant Earring"), and others.

The traditional costume of the Altai people reflects the main aspects of their worldview. Costumes played both a practical and a magical role. A full set of clothing was designed to maximally protect a person from evil spirits. Various items of clothing and their parts were also associated with ideas of fertility, prosperity, and wealth. This was especially reflected in women's clothing, which was associated with their function of motherhood.

An important part of the national costume and the status of a married woman and mother is the *chegedek*. This is a woman's garment in the form of a long, sleeveless caftan with deep armholes and a back slit. It has a sacred-magical protective function. The image of a mother in a *chegedek* can often be found in the poems of Anchy Samunov.

Altai Mother

The beauty of the spring Altai –

In an Altai coat, in a silk chegedek.

The great work of the skilled mother's hands

Remains as a song in Altai.

Wearing the old national costume,

We will be proud of the Altai mother.

Entering the house with an Altai hearth,

First of all, we bow to the mother.

[Samunov 2006: 31; trans. ours]

The main zone of mythological human anatomy is the navel, the center of the body. This most important zone of the human being is protected by a physical attribute - the belt. A person's belonging to the world of people depends on whether they wear a belt or not. Women's belts differed from men's in that they were carefully and intricately decorated, while men's were smooth. Special wedding buckles were made of silver and worn with the wedding coat only on holidays. Women's belts were decorated with a pendant - a plate called *beldish* - a bag for the child's umbilical cord. The number and shape of these bags indicated the number and gender of the children. Pointed bags were for boys, and round ones for girls. All this characterizes the function of protecting and safeguarding children and family life.

The *beldish* buckles were distinguished by their highly artistic design and intricate decorative patterns; the fact that *bel* was a belt decoration is evident from its name; the word *bel* is recorded in the dictionary of Mahmud al-Kashgari (11th century).

In the Russian language dictionary, the word "bel" denotes women's braids or "beldish" - women's braids.

Traditional culture is reflected collectively; its norms are stable and reflect the experience of previous generations. This allows us to single out details and components of the costume as independent, as well as to comprehensively understand the relationship between clothing and jewelry, on the one hand, and the social and natural environment, on the other.

Various decorations, which are no longer used today, served as additional accessories to women's outerwear. The older traditional costume accessories include those directly attached to the costume and those that accompany it.

Silk Tassel

Silk tassels, the color of a rainbow,

Swaying, scattered in the wind.

Warm as a spark from a kindled fire,

The silk tassel illuminated my thoughts.

All the colors of the centuries past

Were painted by the silk tassel.

The fiery desire to rush through life

Was not extinguished by the silk tassel.

On the chegedek, embroidered across the armpits,

Carefully attached silk tassel.

On both sides, like a rainbow,

My mother wore the silk tassel.

When, shimmering, it sways in the wind,

The fire in the hearth flickers like a flame.

When mother in a chegedek comes to meet,

How beautiful is the ancient silk tassel.

[Samunov 2006: 31; trans. ours]

For clarification, the poet sometimes uses references where he gives an interpretation of the existing words.

Ornamental Plaques

Sakusyn is my mother's inherited treasure.

Sakusyn is my mother's success at the hearth.

The wind smoothed the sakusyn.

Fate illuminated the path with the sakusyn.

[Samunov 2006: 27; trans. ours]

A. Samunov's deep knowledge of everyday objects enhances the national color of his works. The analysis of A. Samunov's poetic works helps to decipher the genetic code, aesthetics, and the author's artistic imagery.

Hair ornaments and earrings of Turkic women had a very sacred meaning in traditional culture. This mythical realm was associated with long life, happiness, and the increase of a person's strength; children under one year old were not people in the full sense of the word. Their status changed when their hair was cut for the first time in the *Koyu Kocho* ceremony.

On the backs of young girls

Shining shikshirge.

When they play in the clearing,

The shikshirge jingle.

A beautiful, free ring

Emanates from the shikshirge.

The glow's sparkle

From the tender shikshirge.

Braided into seven parts

The little braids with shikshirge

On the backs of young girls

Curling shikshirge.

[Samunov 2006: 26; trans. ours]

Women also wove large, beautiful perforated flat buttons (*tana*) made of mother-of-pearl, bone, or faience into their braids. The numerous braids of a young bride were twisted into two braids called *tulun*, which were worn only by married women.

Mother-of-Pearl Button

At dawn, like a bright full moon

How beautiful is mother with mother-of-pearl buttons.

Wealth that has drawn in the light of the earth –

The sun's face in you, white mother-of-pearl button.

Mother-of-pearl button, round like the full moon.

The cedar cradle rocks the buttons.

Here is the bright face of my mother.

Here is my eternal admiration.

[Samunov 2006: 27; trans. ours]

Buttons on the clothing of women in Southern Altai served not only a functional but also a decorative role. Rows and rows of buttons were sewn onto the wide turn-down and narrow stand-up collars of dresses and shirts. These included large round flat mother-of-pearl buttons "*tana*", small round white, blue, and red buttons "*topchi*", large blue, green, and red soft buttons "*shar*" with loops of copper or silver metal on top and bottom and a metal base in the form of a rosette, called "*kuyka*".

Kuyka-topchy was an original button and highly valued. It was dark cherry in color, acorn-shaped, and crowned with a silver rosette and one air loop at each end. *Kuyka-topchy* were imported from Mongolia and China. Buttons come in all colors. Buttons were mainly sewn onto coats as fastening decorations. Buttons were sewn on in pairs.

Decorative Button

Since ancient times, mothers have worn

The comfortable, round decorative button.

Glistening on the silk coat

Like a flame reflects the decorative button.

Saw how a drop from the sun's eye

Fell onto the silk coat.

The silver decorative button

I wish I could hold it in my hands, mother.

Decorative button, beautiful button,

Like a ripe red berry.

A drop fallen from the sun

In the daughter's breast, it seems, mother...

[Samunov 2006: 29; trans. ours]

In some texts, national images acquire a new sound, and a tendency towards authorial stylization can be traced. The artistic images used by A. Samunov are subordinated to one task - to revive the ethnic self-awareness of the younger generation.

Strung on the ends of the braids

Beads, cowries – revered things.

When a child was born, the one who breastfed

The mother with braids – this is a beautiful decoration.

Mothers in chegedeks, with flowing tassels on their hats

Brought us from the depths of centuries.

Illuminating our thoughts, from the centuries

The women's jewelry came to us.

[Samunov 2006: 23; trans. ours]

Jylamash (jylanbash) – snake's head. An amulet made of cowrie shells. It is hung in two rows on shamans' hats, used in hair ornaments, and national costumes of girls. It serves to ward off evil spirits. The mother-of-pearl from which the buttons (*tana*) are made was sometimes used for medicinal purposes. Due to their

external resemblance to a snake's head, cowrie shells were called *jylamash* [Oynotkinova 2021].

Earrings were very important for denoting a woman's status and were worn throughout her life. Worn from childhood to adulthood, they changed only in shape and decorative complexity, becoming simpler in old age.

The use of purely national objects (*jylamash*, *jinji*, *chededek*, *shikshirge*, *tana*, *sakusyn*) represents a special layer of the national artistic picture of the world in the poet's work.

A. Samunov's poems are distinguished by a national interpretation of the theme, unique imagery stemming from folklore and mythological origins. The mediation of thoughts and experiences in such works is emphasized by the revelation of the "national" category. Thus, the uniqueness of A. Samunov's lyrics is manifested in the desire to express a national vision and sense of the world, which is confirmed at the level of ideological, figurative, and thematic features.

The jewelry of ethnic women is complex and unique, and traditions are passed down from generation to generation. Today, headdresses are traditionally worn on ceremonial occasions and are rarely used in everyday life. The analysis of the symbols of traditional headdresses shows that in modern life, jewelry has aesthetic, practical, ethnic significance, and social and incantatory religious functions. Today, among the local population, the production of women's jewelry in compliance with traditional rules is beginning to develop. Various production workshops, seminars, and conferences on the history and everyday use of jewelry, their application in holidays and ceremonies are being organized.

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