

The ethnogenesis of the Kazakh dance

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Abstract

The article considers fundamental issues of traditional culture as an integral social-cultural phenomenon via a complex of complementary research methods namely, the analysis of the exemplars of the traditional folk music creative activity and the analysis of the artistic-aesthetic features of dances. The article provides a general analysis of the influence of epos, everyday life, customs and traditions upon the development of the Kazakh dance themes. We can conclude that the Kazakh folk dance is based on the traditional Kazakh culture which originates from the reflection of the reality through the folk cultural-philosophical wisdom.

Key words: National Culture, National Dance, Folklore.

La etnogenesis de la danza Kazaja

Resumen

El artículo considera los problemas fundamentales de la cultura tradicional como un fenómeno sociocultural integral a través de un complejo de métodos de investigación complementarios, a saber, el análisis de los ejemplares de la actividad creativa de la música tradicional y el análisis de las características estéticas y artísticas de las danzas. El artículo proporciona un análisis general de la influencia de epos, la vida cotidiana, las costumbres y las tradiciones sobre el desarrollo de los temas de la danza kazaja. Podemos concluir que la danza popular kazaja se basa en la cultura

tradicional kazaja, que se origina en el reflejo de la realidad a través de la sabiduría popular-filosófica popular.

Palabras clave: Cultura nacional, danza nacional, folklore.

1. Introduction

The study of folklore, memory of cultural artifacts, written sources, language vocabulary allows to claim that dances have been accompanying the whole process of the society development since ancient time until now (Art, 2015; Chatterji, 2016). Folklore dance is a spontaneous expression of feelings, mood and emotions. First of all, it is performed for oneself, and then for a spectator (community, group, society) (Brinson, 2004; Aristidouet al., 2015 Dance, 2016). First of all, folklore dance is a historical phenomenon with a ceremony as its primary source. Ceremonial dances are an integral part of each ritual. Stage dance is primarily intended to be shown to a spectator. It can exclude any elements of other styles, stage techniques, acrobatics (Aristidouet al, 2014; Cugusi et al., 2015).

Like any other culture and art, the Kazakh folk art has gone through a long and original path of its development. The nomadic lifestyle left a unique mark upon the everyday life of the Kazakh people, their thinking, views and perception of the world and – through these factors – upon the development of the culture and self-awareness of the Kazakh people (Dzhanibekobv, 1990; Arutiunian et al., 1998). The study of everyday life, ceremonies, folklore and history allows to state that dances and their elements have been accompanying the whole historical process of the development of the spiritual and artistic culture (Hoppu, 2016). Leaving the extensive historical arguments and proofs behind, it will be sufficient to point to the fact that the Kazakh language itself and the folk speech patterns include the verb *bi* and its derivatives in the meaning of dance and to dance.

This is proved by the discoveries of archeologists, for example, by the petroglyphic drawings from TAMGALY gorge. The petroglyphs of the archeological landscape Tamgaly (Tanbaly) represent one of the most ancient and remarkable monuments of Semirechye rock art. Since 2004, it has been declared UNESCO World Heritage Site. At the end of 1950s, the sanctuary with many petroglyphic drawings was discovered here. Its investigation started in 1970-1980s. The natural boundary of Tamgaly is situated in 170 km to the north-west from Almaty, in Anrakaymountains. The majority of petroglyphs are situated in the bottom part of the main gorge, in the gorge that joins it from the West and in 7 creeks that are located to the north-west from the main gorge. There are nearly 2000 drawings in the main gorge. All of them are divided into 7 groups. The counting of the groups starts from the mouth of the gorge (Tleubayevet al., 2015).



Figure 1. Figures on the wall of the gorges.

There are the drawings that show sunhead gods, the masked, the warriors with long sticks, married couples, women giving birth, and multi-figure compositions that represent men and animals, hunting scenes and scenes of bull sacrifices. The theme of the chariot is rather rare in the drawings. Numerous solar markings are known. The majority of petroglyphs refer to the Bronze Age. The drawings that are made in Saka, animal style are mainly separated from the more ancient petroglyphs. But, in some cases, they complete or even overlap them. The medieval petroglyphic drawings are engraved on the hills that surround the gorge and on the neighboring waterless creeks. The central complex stands out with the highest concentration of petroglyphs and, supposedly, altars. This allows to make a hypothesis about the possible ceremonial use of this site for sacrifices. Apart from the petroglyphs, a lot of ancient burial places were discovered in Tamgaly: stone boxes-cistas from the middle and late Bronze Age, soil and stone grave mounds from the period of the early Iron Age till our times (Dzhanibekov, 1990).

The dance and music have been always inseparably connected in the historic past. At all times, the Kazakh people were famous in the Great Steppe for being outstanding musicians and natural singers. The research of the historical heritage is an important part for the development of each nation. It is especially important for such young states as Kazakhstan. The problem is conditioned by the lack of the systematic researches of the Kazakh folklore cultural heritage. The new impulse for the research of the folk art emerged after the collapse of the Soviet Union.

Thus, the purpose of this article is to consider the development of the Kazakh art of singing and dancing.

2. Methodology

To meet the purpose of the article, a complex of complementary research methods was used, namely, the analysis of the exemplars of the traditional folk music creative activity, the analysis of the artistic-aesthetic features of dances. The method of historicism plays a special role in the

research, because it allowed to consistently reveal the features, functions and nature of the changes in the researched reality in the process of its historical development. Besides, it provided a possibility to show the causal relations and regularities of the historical development.

3. Data, analysis and results

Music instruments play a special role in the development of the art of singing and dancing. In Kazakhstan, the nomads are viewed as the successors of the nomadic traditional culture and spirituality. Due to the conventional and fixed character of their everyday life, the mythological conscience played an extremely important role. Inevitably, it became the basic part of the traditional culture. The sacral character of music language that is hidden in its fundamental moments is directly fused in various languages of the culture (word, everyday life, ornament, music, the most ancient art of the petroglyphic drawings) and must be perceived in this separable unity. The connection and melting of various arts was carried out via a cult connector – shaman, baksy. Baksy is a more widespread word among the Kazakh people than shaman.

In our opinion, baksy is a variant of shamanism that is adapted to everyday life of the Kazakh people. Shamans played an important role in the socio-political life of families and tribes before spreading of the Muslim religion. Their main function was to prevent the phenomena that were dangerous for a person of society. Through falling into a trance, baksy neutralized the negative energy that accumulated within the society and harmonized the life of society in such a way. After Islam spread to the territory of the Middle Asia and Kazakhstan, shamans were perceived as people who were able to contact with devil and demons. The spreading and development of the culture in general and the emergence of the people's representatives – the creators of word and music (sal, sere, akyn, zhyrau, singers and dancers) changed the attitude towards shamans. Like a lot of things in the nomads' traditional culture, the shaman's instrument – kobyz – has a magical meaning even in its construction. Its form reminds of a swan as one of the most worshiped birds in the world. It is the totem of many Prototurkic tribes (Dzhanibekov, 1990).



A



B

Figure 2. Baksy



Figure 3. Kobyz



Figure 4. Dombra

The genealogy of another important instrument of the Kazakh people –dombra – is rooted in the depth of unrecorded times. The description of its predecessors can be found in the works of some scholars. al-Farabi's is one of the most outstanding representatives of the medieval eastern philosophy. Ibn Sina is a medieval philosopher, mathematician, music theoretician, Eastern scholar, medieval Persian scholar, philosopher and doctor, representative of the eastern Aristotelianism. Al-Khorezmi is one of the most outstanding medieval scholars of the IXth century with Khorezmy roots, mathematician, astronomer, geographer and historian. The ancestors perceived the construction of dombra as anthropomorphic: the pegs that the strings were tightened to were viewed as a head, the fingerboard was perceived as neck and chest, whereas the plate was viewed as legs.

The construction of the fingerboard that was divided into moving frets also had a sacral meaning as a sense of human life from birth to death. Kobyz, dombra and other folk instruments are used to perform the kuy. Kuy is the name of the traditional Kyrgyz, Kazakh instrumental piece. Kuys are characterized by a simple, mixed and variable metrics and various forms: from simple strumming to multifrequent constructions that are similar to rondo. The music of kuys may include the parts of pentatonic scales and is based on diatonicism. The kuys are mainly for two voices. However, some of them are both for one and three voices. Those who perform kuys are called kuyshi. The emotional-imaginative composition of the kuy music is characterized by the richness and variety, they reflect folk wisdom, perception of the world and notions of the beauty.

The dance traditions were closely connected with all forms of artistic art and, first of all, with decorative-applied art. The ornament was the most important element of the decorative-applied art that was taking its shape during the working practice in accordance to the Kazakh nomadic life conditions. As it was already mentioned, the themes of ornament are closely connected with the nomads' mythological and sacral thinking and is characterized by the variety. The ornament widely reflected the aesthetic attitude towards the reality, towards the nature and labor. Within the stylized world of the ornamental patterns, there are cosmogonic, plant and geometrical motifs. The most wide-spread ornaments include the following: koshkarmuyiz (a ram's horn), kyzgaldak (a flower, tulip), Tort muyiz (four horns), etc. It is important to note that the motifs of the horn, cattle traces and the bases of the nomads' life activity also had a magical meaning.



Figure 5. Ornaments in the dance tradition.

These ornamental patterns are reproduced within the traditions of the Kazakh dance movements in a specific way. The Kazakh ornament is originally reproduced both in the dance pattern, in its dynamic movements and in individual movements of the arms and legs. Various combined, these elements alternate each other depending on the dance theme and its musical-rhythmic imagery. In such a way, they create a deep meaning, an imaginary, figurative language-dance that reveals the feelings and character of the Kazakh people (Tleubayev et al., 2015). The variety of the dance themes – labor, zoomorphic, satirical, lyric, and comic, fairy-tale – was conveyed by the folk craftsmen through the most various expressive dance means. This palette of movements included everything, from acrobatic-trickery to the brilliant, subtlest technique of the movements of arms, legs, and bends of the body. They were aimed at conveying of the feelings and moods of the people and animals.

The movements of a horse that were aligned to a rider's movements served as the basis of the nomadic cattleman's everyday life. Having found their way into the flesh and blood of the Kazakh people, they naturally became the very basis of the dance plasticity. Through many transformations during the centuries, they turned out to be very stable in time. They can be found even in modern times. For example, the movements at shabys, Tingiztartys, Uzengikagys, etc. Since the dawn of time, all age groups of the Kazakh population and, especially, children took part in aul and family celebrations and folk entertainments. They were called toya. The most talented dancers demonstrated their skills directly in the crowd, among celebrating people. The mastery of improvisation enriched and favored the development of the traditional regional features of the existing dance forms that included mass, solo and pair dances.

Another way of the distribution of dance traditions is represented by the family everyday life within which the traditions were kept safe. The lyric theme found its expression in the female popular dance. It favored the development of the original technique of the movements of arms, small movements of legs, bends of the body and back, contrasting angles, complex coordination. The Kazakh girls and women used their skills of everyday work and life as a plastic basis for the improvisation within these movements. These skills were poetized by the artistic phantasy. The everyday working life included hand-weaving, national embroidery, ornamental felting, plasticity in using of the spinning wheel-urshik, pitching of kazyks (the pegs for weaving) into the ground. All these activities required the habitual movements that were associated with the drawing of ornament, gathering and choosing of the thread colors, winding of threads, etc. Being influenced by inspiration and phantasy, these actions that were habitual and widely understood from the very childhood, became highly artistic means of the plastic expressiveness.



Figure 6. The movements of hand weaving are familiar from childhood.

The following dancing games were widely practiced: Kusbegy-duaylpaz (training of a golden eagle), Koyan-berkut (golden eagle hunting for a hare). These games were created and practiced by the people. They were constantly improving and transforming on the basis of the revised symbolic content of the ceremonial events that reproduced a hunter's skills in training of a hunting bird in an elusive manner (Dzhanibekov, 1990). As a result of the revision of the ritual-magic ceremonies of the nomadic pastoralists, the popular Kazakh dancing game or teke emerged. It imitated the moves and sudden jumps of a little goat in a humorous manner.

4. Discussion

The Kazakh epos also provides avenues for the creative fantasy of the folk art of dancing. An important role is played by the image of a courageous girl-warrior who fights against the invaders together with Dzhigits. The prototype of many of these girls is a legendary queen of the Saka and Massagetae tribes, the nomadic pastoralist people. Tomiris (appr. 570-520 B.C.) won the war against the Persian king Cyrus II after his attempt to seize the kingdom of Massagetae. The story of Tomiris and her victories over Cyrus were well known in the ancient world. It became a legend. The folk games-races Baiga-kyz-kuu (the pursuit for a girl) and Kyz-bori (girl-wolf) are firmly entrenched in the Kazakh everyday life. They reflect the noble memory of the Kazakh people.

The female lyric dances deserve special attention. The features of the dance vocabulary depended on the costume that was designed to perform these dances. The long dress with wrappings at the bottom hid the legs, whereas free sleeves provided space for the movements of arms in a big group of dances. Other dances that imitated ancient Amazons-warrior women demanded shorter dresses with plackets on each side. Combined with bloomers that were tucked in the heeled boots with cocked toe-caps, they allowed wider movements. In their plasticity, these movements were close to the tradition of the male art of dancing. While the dance movements that were expressed in various combinations of dances were rather famous and recognizable, the ancient dance music did not reach us in its complete form.

But, during the centuries, a horse has been the undeniable leader of the folk ceremonies and cults, the ruler of the nomads' minds. The cult of a horse in the Kazakh spiritual culture that was reflected in folk beliefs, ceremonies, games, epos, songs and kuys inevitably determined the themes of many solo and mass dances. They depicted both a Dzhigit's mastery and work and a horse's untamable ride.

The Kazakh folk dances Kara zhorga, Tepenkok, Zhorgargayelikteu, Zhorgalau have made a long evolutionary way from the collective ceremonial symbolism, through dance game, to the genuine art of dancing. They express the dance language of a person's individual feelings. The movements of this and some other male dances that were created by the people construct highly artistic images of the strong, courageous and skilled Dzhigits. The people are proud of these reliable and tireless defenders. These images reflect plastic ideals of the Kazakh people. The images that were borrowed from the magic fairy-tales can also be encountered in dance compositions of the Kazakh folk dances (Abirov, 1997).

The image of the villainess Zheztynak seems to be the most interesting one. She is a young, beautiful girl who was charmed by evil forces and turned into a witch with copper nails. The originality and unsquareness are safely preserved for the dance music. Its origins greatly depend on a subtle nuancing of movements as a specific feature of the folk Kazakh dance: from ephemeral easiness and gentle flow to intensive suddenness. This alternating palette of feelings, original improvisability characterize instrumental music heritage and are perceived by a musician (accompanier) in an extremely subtle way. When accompanying to a dancer, when looking at him or her and showing the compassion, a folk musician clearly gets and conveys his or her improvisational emotionality. This is achieved by slowing down and speeding up the music, through long or short pauses, through alternating of quiet and loud, melodious soft and vibrant modes. When performing a dance, both a musician and a dancer form a creative whole.

An outstanding, selfless work of SharaZhienkulova (Gulshara) played a crucial role in the development of the professional Kazakh dance. She is a dancer, teacher, and people's artist of the Kazakh SSR. She was both an outstanding dancer who thoroughly collected the examples of folk choreography and embodied its achievements in her performances and a tireless advocate and enthusiast of her creed. Thanks to her and to the work of her followers and students, the Kazakh dance gained a rightful place among the folk dances of other countries, achieved an accomplished form, became methodically grounded, logically completed and spectacular (Sarynova, 1976). In order to favor the development of the national art of dancing, SharaZhienkulova often traveled and studied the everyday life, traditions and customs of various Kazakh regions. The following dances became the results of these travels: Tattimbet, Aizhankyz, Kara zhorga, Kyrykkyz. She managed to express the soul beauty of the dramatic characters through her plastic movements. Zhienkulova visited many foreign countries with her tours. In 1936 and 1958, she participated in the decades of the Kazakh literature and art in Moscow.

The study of the art of dancing and singing will enhance the self-awareness of the people. However, it should be noted that the development of folk dance within the system of modern spiritual culture faces many challenges on its way (Arutiunian et al., 1998). The environment that preserves and reproduces the initial meaning of the traditional culture gradually disappears. The folk dances develop within the system of professional education as stage dances. Their mission is associated rather with general humanitarization and internationalization of the society. However, they possess a huge potential of the important factor of ethnic identification. The conservation of the traditional dance forms and their further development is the basis for preserving of the ethnic culture.

The research revealed the complexity and variety of the most ancient dance culture, significantly enriched the culturological knowledge on the place and role of the dance in the evolution of human civilization. The research data prove a special significance of the dance in ancient times. They serve as a basis for the new evaluations, interpretations, generalizations and point to the new directions of further queries.

5. Conclusions

As one of the forms of the artistic folk thinking, the creative art of dancing created plastic ideals and established moral ideals in its aesthetics. They correspond to the general worldview of the Kazakh people. The character, morals, customs, traditions, the subtlest nuances of a person's feelings and emotions found their expression in the dance plasticity. We can conclude that the Kazakh folk dance is based on the traditional Kazakh culture which originates from the reflection of the reality through the folk cultural-philosophical wisdom. Nowadays, the new directions of the development of the Kazakh dances emerged. Through buying into the idea of national self-awareness, more and more people demonstrate their interest to the folklore and fall into the ranks of those who admire this wonderful art. We still can find outstanding exemplars of this folk art that bear national color. In the course of time, they did not lose the inherent cheerful lightsome and mass style, driving zest for life and incredible charm of the Kazakh people. The Kazakh dance continues to live and develop its creative potential.

The qualitative knowledge and wide outlook are needed. The main priority of the public conscience modernization is the formation of a competitive state. That is why it is so important to preserve the uniqueness, values and traditions of the people. The spiritual restoration is an important step on the way to the bright future. The modern Kazakh culture develops its continuity in various state programs.

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