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The Role of the Individual and the Collective Aspects in the Formation of the Genre of the Adyghe Heroic-Historical Song

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Abstract. In the present article for the first time the attempt is made of comprehending the origins of the epic, historic, and heroic genres of folklore, which present a guiding line of Adyghe folk song and have a direct relation to the aristocratic stratum of society. The object of the research is formed by the narrative of the Adyghe folk song repertoire, while the subject of study is presented by the phenomenology of their social origins and certain aspects of their communication. For the sake of argumentation, analogous phenomena in other national cultures (the Polish, Japanese, and Russian) are cited. An important factor of digression from the customary collective form of emergence of the songs of the Adyghe (Circassians) is expressed by the character of the social ladder of those communities wherein the etiquette of nobility predominates. The active bearers of folk music artistry in most cases created their music individually, so it becomes possible to speak of the collective character of the emergence of heroic-historical songs only when 2–7 *dzheguako* (professional singers) took part in the act of artistic creation. Thereby, the phenomenon of folk music in the Adyghe traditional culture brings the personal aspect to the forefront. For the first time, the new term of “collective personality” is brought into Adyghe folk music studies.

Keywords: noble class, uorks, Vsevolod Miller, elite folklore genre, Uork Habze, social institution of the *dzheguako*, collective personality

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Роль индивидуального и коллективного аспектов в формировании жанра героико-исторической песни адыгов

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Аннотация. В настоящей статье впервые предпринимается попытка осознания происхождения важных для этнической культуры эпических и героико-исторических фольклорных жанров, которые представляют путеводную линию адыгского фольклора и имеют прямое отношение к аристократическому слою социума. Объектом исследования являются повествовательные тексты народно-песенного фольклора адыгов, а предметом изучения выступает феноменология их социального происхождения и некоторые ракурсы коммуникации. В качестве аргументации приводятся аналогичные явления в других национальных культурах (польской, японской, русской). Важным фактором отступления от привычной коллективной формы появления песни адыгов (черкесов) становится характер социальной лестницы общества, где в формировании этнической культуры доминирует дворянский этикет. Активные носители фольклорного творчества в большинстве случаев творили единолично, говорить же о коллективном характере происхождения героико-исторических песен можно тогда, когда в творческом акте участвовали 2–7 джегуако (профессионалов-песнетворцев). Тем самым фольклорный феномен в традиционной культуре адыгов выдвигает на арену личностный аспект. Впервые в адыгскую музыкальную фольклористику вводится новый термин «коллективная личность».

Ключевые слова: дворянское сословие, уорки, Всеволод Миллер, элитарный фольклорный жанр, Уорк Хабзэ, общественный институт джегуако, коллективная личность

Introduction

The unquestioned origins and existence of traditional musical creativity, the so-called classical folk music, in the sphere of the peasant (i.e., the lowest) stratum of society has been established a priori in folk music studies. Such an interpretation in Russian music scholarship has predominated for a lengthy period of time, as has the collective character of the emergence and dissemination of song creativity. At the same time, the role of separate personalities in this process has been obscured for just as long. However, it is logical to presume that the great task of transmitting collective

experience from one generation to the next has been carried out by especially gifted people with high moral-ethical ideals and tenacious memories, endowed with artistic imaginations. It must also be noted that various strata of society which on virtue of the historical-cultural peculiarities of the particular ethnicity had engaged in active participation in the formation of the national culture have been deprived of necessary attention.

Thus, culture of the Polish nobility (*szlachtyca*) began to be formed from the 17th century, pervading through the entire population. Elizaveta Macheyevska, basing herself on the lesser-known Polish enlightener

of the early 19th century, Hugo Kołłątaj, points out that “in previous epochs, only the customs and traditions of the *szlachta* had been given publicity, and not those of the common people.” [1, p. 58] A century and a half later, their compatriot, ethnomusicologist Anna Czekanowska asserts the role of the nobility, which had left behind a noticeable trace in the national culture: “The epic songs most frequently represented the repertoire of the highest strata of society.” [2, p. 86] World history has known many similar phenomena. For example, the Japanese “Bushido” (the code of practice of the medieval samurai warriors), separate elements of which remain relevant in contemporary Japan, as well, may be related to them.¹

Thereby, we must agree with the opinion of authoritative scholars, who have found in traditional cultures features pertaining to different social estates. In this respect, attention must be paid to Natalia Gayevskaya’s utterance that two opposing directions emerged in folk music creativity: on the one hand, broad dissemination has been received by “the people’s” or “folk” culture, and on the other hand — by “scholarly (subsequently, bourgeois)” culture. [3, p. 323]

In this context, Russian folk music studies has gone approximately the same path. Thus, in the late 19th century, Vsevolod Miller stated for the first time about the aristocratic origins of the Russian *bylina* (ballad) epos. [4] Such an assertion evoked protests, primarily from the people pertaining to the category of those in power, and accusations of supporting a “socially hostile” theory. In democratic circles, and even among the conservatives, many have perceived there an attempt of exacerbation

of social contradictions. Subsequently, Miller’s supporters were persecuted, having been deprived of the opportunity of engaging in scholarship, and during the period of the Soviet regime were even put in prisons.

A considerable amount of time had passed before researchers turned to the subject once again. Quite possibly, for this reason some of them approached the “silenced” issue rather cautiously: “In folk culture aristocratism is obscured, it is unobtrusive, since it reveals itself behaviorally, rather than stereotypically or genealogically ... it is certainly not pronounced from the position of the speaker, but with detachment, as a truth known to all.” [5, p. 23]

The realization of the necessity of studying the folklore of the various estates came by degrees. At the outset, attention was turned to the songs of the different estate groups in urban folk music (the cants of the time of Peter the Great, patriotic and lyrical songs, chastooshkas (four-line rhyming verses), and romance songs. During the Soviet period of our history, the disallowance of the artistic legacy of the other social groups, besides the peasant population, had been stipulated by the predominating political doctrine, which convinced everybody that “the classes of exploiters cannot create anything decent.” [6, p. 152] On the other hand, in recent decades, the attitude towards the individual in folklore has changed noticeably. This, in my opinion, was greatly instigated by the appearance in 1960 of the unexampled monograph *The Singer of Tales* (in English), which was based on the epic material created by the peoples of Yugoslavia. The authors of the joint work were professor of Slavic studies Albert Lord and his teacher Milman Parry.

¹ Special interest is aroused by the opinion shared by researchers of various scholarly directions of Kabardino-Balkaria about the coincidence of the code of honor of the Japanese samurai with the noble etiquette of the Adyghe.

The book was published in Russian in 1994. The primary thesis of the research was expressed by the role of personality in folk creativity. Here Lord proclaimed that “the singer of tales is not a conscious iconoclast, he is an artist working within the frameworks of tradition.” [7, p. 15]

The new approach towards the active connoisseurs of folk culture has been disseminated in Russian folklore studies, as well. This is how the time began when gradually, so far in an informatory way, the names were revealed of previously anonymous people capable of creating songs and simultaneously performing them. In this context, we must mark out the perceptible breakthrough in the elucidation of the characteristic features of brilliant bearers of folk art. Taking as a basis the collective beginning in the people’s creative self-expression, separate personalities have made considerable contributions to the creation of archetypal factors intrinsic to any concrete ethnic culture. In 2024, a noteworthy publication of the Russian Institute of Art History came out, devoted to the problems of the role and meaning of certain ethnophors in the process of folk art. Alexander Romodin’s article *O tvorcheskom sushchestvovanii cheloveka v traditsionnoi culture* [About the Human Being’s Creative Existence in Traditional Culture] deserves special attention. At the beginning of his research, the author declares the basic thesis of his work: “The problem of the existence of man in culture is actually the problem of the existence of culture itself, since solely and exceedingly by man is culture made, created,” — thereby, individualizing the concrete bearer of folk art. [8, p. 7]

In 2009, using folklore material about the Ashkhotov family, I established that in the communicative mechanism “‘from father to son,’ in the synchronic perspective great significance is attained by the individual factor, and in the diachronic angle — by the collective element.” [9, p. 40] At that time, that conclusion found an analogy with the meaning of Alexei Veselovsky’s dichotomy of “group subjectivism” and “collective emotionality.” It is important to note that the forerunner of the concept of “collective personality”² in folk music studies was presented by Evgeny Gippius’ assertions about the two forms of performance. The researcher highlighted “the professional ensembles of artificers (‘virtuosic’ and ‘constrained’), distinguished by individualization ... and the ‘vernacular’ ensembles, which are assembled spontaneously and do not possess permanent groups of musicians.” [12, p. 50] According to the famous culturologist, Dr.Sci. (Philosophy) Anna Kostina, “the collective personality acts as a representative ... in class-divided societies ... in the name of ‘the people’ ... on behalf of the estate that presents the basis of the social pyramid and follows traditional norms.” [11, p. 22]

In the present article, the attempt is made of studying the harmonious contexture of traditional Adyghe folk music (let us label it by custom as peasant and classical) with the heroic-historical songs, the content of which was determined by the feudal period of history. Particularly this genre would subsequently present the guiding position of Adyghe folk music in general.

² This term appeared for the first time over a hundred years ago thanks to German philosopher and sociologist, one of the founders of philosophical anthropology, Max Scheler. In Russian folklore studies, the expression “cultural personality” is examined by Serafima Nikitina in the context of philological and culturological studies as the “collective lingual personality,” [10] while Anna Kostina defines it as a “subject of traditional culture.” [11]

The Class-Related Aspect in the Formation of the Adyghes' Narrative Genres

It is generally known that the ethical and moral aspects of world outlook in Russian culture are disclosed to a greater degree in sacred chants than in folk songs. It has been historically determined that the Adyghes have not embraced the Christian religious confession (or they did not have the chance to do so). As for accepting the Islamic religion during the period approximately between the 14th and the 17th centuries, which encroached upon the times of the so-called military democracy, the emerged mental ethnical priorities became so ingrained in the people, that the religious principles could not affect their ethical social consciousness. Such historical circumstances undoubtedly were conducive to the consolidation of the cultural paradigms of all the strata of society, while preserving the originality and intrinsic value of the national culture.

Starting with the era of early feudalism (the 15th and 16th centuries), the Adyghe class hierarchy consisted of princes, the nobility (the uorks), the freed and dependent peasants, and the lowest estate — the household servants (slaves), where the greatest number of the population consisted of the uorks and the freed peasants.³ According to the statistics, during the 17th and 18th centuries, the nobility took up one third of the entire population. Particularly the privileged uorks (the uzdens⁴) assumed the predominating position in the formation of the national culture in all

the directions. The proof that particularly this estate turned out to be the “pivotal predominant element” of the ethnical self-identification is served by the fact of a total absence in the Adyghe language of the word combinations “pshy khabze” (princely Khabza⁵) or “pshyll khabze” (peasant-serf Khabza). In this context, the British military intelligence officer, a participant of the Caucasus War on the side of the Circassians James Bell notes that the Adyghes “could boast of that morality, accordance, calm, decorum — all those qualities that distinguish this people in its everyday mutual relations. <...> The extremities of luxury and destitution, refinement and abject existence are unknown to an equal degree here.” [13, p. 479] This quotation provides an indirect indication of the limited rapprochement of the “higher” and the “lower” strata of society.

Having expanded itself, this type of cultural phenomenon spanned all the estates of the Adyghe population, asserting the moral-ethical norms of behavior. Thereby, a sturdy system of interaction between the different estate groups, which was in effect up until the second half of the 19th century, exerting a significant influence on the ethnic cultures of the neighboring peoples of the Northern Caucasus. A confirmation of such a situation may be seen in the words of the well-known epos researcher Vasily Abayev: “The epithet of ‘Kabardinian’ was ... a synonym of aristocratic refinement and *comme il faut* qualities.” [14, p. 23]

As a natural result, the aforementioned code of unwritten laws and rules in society

³ Most of the Adyghe (Circassian) subcultures pertained to aristocratic circles, with the exception of the Natukhai, Abadzekh and Shapsug peoples, who lived in conditions of democratic societies.

⁴ Uzden (Turkic) — a feudal class, a synonym to the Kabardinian uork, signifying among the Turkic and Caucasian people “making decisions himself,” “free,” or “noble.” On the Caucasus, such a terminological definition is cultivated among the Kumyks, Balkarians, and Karachayevians (peoples with Turkic languages), while the Adyghes, overall, use their own term “uork.”

⁵ Khabza (law, custom, tradition) — a code of unwritten laws and rules by which the Adyghes lived.

received the terminological definition of “*uork etiquette*.” According to many researchers, this process gradually began to penetrate both the “high” and the “low” strata of the estate hierarchy of Adyghe society. Zaurbek Kozhev, Cand.Sci (History), in his monograph *Sotsial'no-politicheskoe i etnokul'turnoe prostranstvo Cherkesii (XVI–XIX vv.): printsipy samoorganizatsii* [The Social-Political and Ethno-Cultural Space of Circassia (from the 16th to the 19th Centuries): Principles of Self-Organization] confirms Nodar Rekhviashvili’s opinion that the Kabardinian uork etiquette “was accepted as a form of a unified norm of behavior by almost all the Caucasians.” [15, p. 143] Expanding the present thesis, the researcher sums up: “the broad dissemination and prestige in the Northern Caucasus of the elite forms of material culture were a reflection of the predominance and popularity in this region of ethno-cultural stereotypes and aesthetic values of Adyghe feudal society.” [16, p. 402]

In concept, the ethical-philosophical doctrine of the Uork Khabze, which was “the locomotive of Circassian history” (Asfar Kuyok), contained the profound meaning of the key ethical concepts: humaneness, respectfulness, reason, fortitude, honor. It evolved approximately over the course of 4–5 thousand years in the Nart sagas and songs and, as it may be stated, has to a certain extent been preserved to this day. The basic social duties of the uorks included defense of their territories from various incursions and economic concerns. In regard to the state of the Adyghes’ overall culture of that time, from the position of the civilizational achievements, Adyghe researcher Samir Khotko puts forward the following arguments:

“the living standards, adequate nutrition from one generation to the next, cleanliness, compliance with hygienic medical-epidemiological requirements had to impact in a positive way the outward appearance and the physical condition of the population of Circassia.” [17, p. 38]

The furcated estate of the uorks, in whose milieu the cultural core of the ethnicity was formed, consisted of three groups (statuses). They dictated the high moral-ethical forms of behavior, accentuating respect towards the elders, modesty, generosity, while an important stimulus of their behavior was valor, which bore a direct connection to the spiritual-moral values. If somebody did not observe these century-old norms of culture, then, undoubtedly, such a person risked losing his status of a uork. The image and behavior of a uork (nobleman) presented a lofty example for all of society. A person who received physical and moral upbringing in the “atalyk” social institution (wherein he was taken into another family for a certain period of time to be brought up), was a valiant warrior, had a perfect possession of the techniques of horseback riding, and demonstrated high tact and profound reverence for his interlocutor in his behavior.⁶

The most powerful of them were the uorks of the first degree, who have left a discernible trace in the history of the Adyghes (Circassians). They (the Tambiev, Anzorov, Kudenetov, Dokshukov, Astemirov, Islamov families, etc.) were tightly present in the circles of the suzerain-princes and enjoyed great authority, not only in their entire communities, but also in adjacent ethnic groups, where they had numerous *kunak*-friends. Notwithstanding their high status, many of them remained

⁶ Up to the present times, neighboring peoples, when endowing worthy praise upon a youth, make use of the expression “he sits on his horse as a Kabardinian.”

benignant, capable of resolving any complex political or social problems, i.e., they served as bright examples of behavior ascribed by the codes of their estate. For example, in 1722, the supreme prince Aslanbek Kaytukin sent from Kabarda on a mission, headed by the supreme uorks-councilors Tambiev, Kudenetov, and Kazanokov, for negotiations with Peter the Great. [18, p. 483] This event, undoubtedly, bore witness to the high level of trust on the part of the princes towards representatives of lower strata in the hierarchy of Adyghe society.

There is another example, characterizing the noble estate in a different perspective. The uorks were not only worthy warriors of their homeland, but also existential sages, natural intellectuals, endowed with creative self-identification. The names of talented folk poets have been preserved in Adyghe history, many of them came from the uork milieu. They are Lyasha Agnokov, Kambot Abazov, Kilchuko Sizhazhev, and others. It is symptomatic that the supreme prince of Kabarda Kurgoko Atazhukin (1695–1709) was a well-known poet and singer. The art works of the highest estate was permeated with humanistic content and profound philosophical contemplation.

In the Kabardinian aristocratic milieu, a special position is held by Zhabagi Kazanoko (ca. 1685–1752), a paramount uork, an advisor to Kurgoko Atazhukin (Hatokshoko), a legendary public figure, an acknowledged thinker, a great connoisseur of folk traditional culture. His literary heritage — fables, proverbs, legends, aphorisms — has been disseminated not only in its ethnic space, but also beyond its confines, and also have found their worthy position in the Adyghe folk legacy. Some of the aphorisms in oral form have acquired the function of folk sayings, idioms, and moralistic utterances that are broadly used in contemporary everyday speech.

Here we must add the following fact of the social privileges of the nobility: a uork

possessed the right to change his vassal at any time. If a prince appeared in society unworthy of his status, the uorks dissatisfied with him had the right of depriving him of his legitimate belonging to the high elites (for example, the entire family of the Tokhtamysh princes was subjected to this lot).

The Phenomenology of Heroic-Historical Songs in the Context of the Dichotomy of "the Collective vs. the Individual"

It is known that the early stage of emergence of the Adyghe folk song legacy was characterized by the Nart (epic) song of the 3rd century BC. Having traversed the stages of the Maikop, the Dolmen, and the Maikop-Novoslobodnensky archeological cultures, it preserved its resilience up until the 13th century AD. In other words, the epic genre took a hold of the beginning of feudalization in a peculiar way, a testimony of which may be held by the texts themselves of the Nart legends — it was not by chance that the name of the hero of a later epic cycle, the Nart Badynoko was preceded by the feudal title *pshi*, i.e., *prince* Badynoko. It was particularly the epos, as scholars deem it, ushered in a new period of folklore — the emergence of a new heroic-historical genre. In the context of the topic chosen by us, it is important to note that the Nart legends and songs were most likely assembled in the circles of warriors, active hero-knights, who were the chief representatives of Adyghe society of the remote past — to be precise, the elite of that time period.

In his comprehensive work *Kabardinsky fol'klor* [Kabardinian Folk Music], Mikhail Talpa asserts for the first time the unusual characteristic features of the traditional Adyghe folk song, relating the "gybza" (lamentation song) to an elite genre. [19, p. 135] Further on, the researcher justly notes: "It is erroneous to think that during this 'golden' age of Kabardinian aristocratic folk music, this form

of creativity was exclusively aristocratic.” [Ibid., p. 136] Indeed, the folk legacy of the Adyghe (Circassians), to be sure, also includes other genres (agrarian and family ritual songs), which illustrated existential being and were generated to a greater degree with the participation of the “lower” strata of society. Since the permeation of aristocratism into the process of creating folk music became possible during the feudal period of history, for the sake of actualizing the set problem in the article, the emphasis will be made on the sizeable genre of the heroic-historical songs, to which the aforementioned lamentation song pertains.

Mikhail Talpa’s assertion is not accompanied by any necessary substantiation of the lamentation songs belonging to the elite form of folksong creativity. As a rule, lamenting songs recount the dramatic lot or tragic fate of separate historical figures. It must be said that virtually all the protagonists, not only in the lamenting songs, but also in the heroic-historical songs, are of aristocratic lineage, and for the most part pertain to the noble estate of the uorks. Women are also frequently present in the storylines of the songs, at times presenting themselves as the main protagonists. Their names are customarily preceded by the definition “*guasha*,” widespread in folk texts (translated as “*duchess*”), even when they do not possess such a high aristocratic status.

It has already been noted that the heroic-historical songs, reflected in the manner of litmus paper the occurring stratification of society with the tendency of a preponderance of the significance of the noble-aristocratic strata, its relevance in the determination of the moral and ethical norms of national world

perception. For this reason, let us now proceed with the analytical section of the article, with the goal of argumentation of the aristocratism in the genre of the Adyghe heroic-historical songs.

First of all, it is important to note that this genre does not entirely correspond to the commonly established stereotype of the historical song presenting a narrative story, at times without any emotional subtext. The style of the Adyghe heroic-historical song is such that, consistently fixating the chronology of historical events, it brings out to the forefront the emotional characteristic features of the protagonists’ actions, disclosing the artistic content of the text.

It is well-known that in folk music creativity, the figurative-expressive sphere, when coordinating with the genre’s functional duties, determines the concrete features of cultural identification. Taking such a thesis into consideration, it becomes necessary to assert that the folk texts in the Adyghe’s heroic-historical songs are created under the influence of the etiquette of the nobility: “Your golden dagger glowing similar to gold is glistening on your hip,”⁷ “He himself is great, having followed the trails of the Narts,”⁸ “You have spurred up the battalion in which you are fighting, you have been a festive pillar (supporter)!”⁹ Such an ideal hero in the guise of a “noble man” becomes the chief determinant of traditional culture, the center of folkloristic creativity. The evaluation of the virtues of heroic feats is based on valor, disdain for death, loyalty to the ideas of honor, honesty, and integrity. There may be further additions to such a characterization — physical perfection, high decorum, modesty, i.e., the main concepts

⁷ *Plach o Digulibge, Tambiya syne* [The Lamentation of Digulibga, the Son of Tambiya].

⁸ *Pesnya o Zakhadzhoko Charachane* [The Lay of Zakhadzhoko Charachan].

⁹ *Pesnya o Karakashkatauskoi bitve* [The Lay of the Karakashkatau Battle].

developed in social institutions of the atalyks and horsemen, the epicenter of which was the aristocratic paradigmatics.

The argumentation for attribution of the heroic heroic-historical songs to the aristocratic culture is founded on 154 folkloristic specimens published in a compendium of the Adyghe's folkloristic works (NPINA)¹⁰ under the general editorship of Evgeny Gippius. The latter consists of heroic (marching and memorial) and lamenting (lamentation songs, mourning, purgative, convicts', and lyrical) songs. In most of them, the vitally important events of Adyghe history are military contacts connected with the numerous intrusions of Ottoman armies, Crimean Tatars, Kumyk, Nogay, and Kalmyk armies. Immense losses were brought to the people by inner and intertribal feuds, as well as the Caucasus War, as the result of which the risk was created of infringement on the peoples' territorial integrity and cultural identity. For this reason, such constant conflicts involved the participation of the entire population, but most often under the leadership of the estate elites. Because of that, frequently the protagonists of folk lays were represented by noblemen, whose names have been preserved in folk texts. If the creator of the lay did not appeal to a concrete name of a warrior, he made use of metaphorical characterizations — a valiant horse rider, a Nart youth, a brave warrior ("no matter, from what family I come from, today I shall demonstrate to you, who I am!"). [20, p. 132] According to the statistics, such heroic heroic-historical songs comprise approximately 79% of all of them.

The songs expressing the social conflicts between the elites and the other strata of the Adyghe society, paradoxical as it may be,

comprise a rather modest position place in the folklore, which testifies of a state of undisturbed social harmony in the traditional society. The leading Kabardinian folklorist and epos scholar Adam Gutov, likewise, asserts that "overall, the social contradictions assume rather seldom the leading position in the sphere of attention of the bearers of Adyghe traditional folklore." [21, p. 42] Nonetheless, in certain songs the confrontation in the relations between the elite and the dependent peasants is openly declared. In such a way the popular song *Sarmakho* begins: "Unhappy during an insidious time we are born; let the noble princes stop giving birth forever." [20, p. 224] During the second half of the 18th century, in Kabarda the *Lay of Damaley* (*the Army of Zhukhloshuboy*¹¹) was created, wherein the people assert: "we live, only to oblige the uorks," they are answered by the leader of the peasants; insurrection Mamsyryko Damaley: "This is a laborious life, a wretched existence." [22, p. 224]

At the end of the Caucasus War, the most tragic situation occurred for some of the Caucasian peoples, especially for the Adyghe and the Abkhazians — annihilation during the course of the war, death from various diseases (including the plague), and compulsory deportation by sea to the cities of Turkey, during which many ships were sunk. Thus, during this period, the Adyghe alone, according to some scholars, lost around 2.5 million people. In this connection, Khotko cites, on the example of only the Small Kabarda, a considerable decrease of the number of people: "with a population of 6000 people, there was a residential density similar to that of a desert — 1.06 person per 1 square kilometer." [17, p. 165]

¹⁰ *Narodnye pesni i instrumental'nye naigryshi adygov* [Folk Songs and Instrumental Tunes of the Adyghe]. Moscow: Sovetskii kompozitor Publ., 1980; 1981; 1986; 1990.

¹¹ The differentiation of peasants who wear short sheepskin fur coats.

Such global catastrophes generated a set of lamentation songs under one overall title *The Road to Istanbul*, which sound up to the present day both on the native soil and in the diaspora (Turkey, Syria, Jordan): “From our native land, — o, woe, — we are sent away by the bloody tears of those who shed them. The land we are led to is unfamiliar to us.” [Ibid., p. 441]

Among the social institutions of the Adyghe¹² traditional culture, there was the institution of *dzheguako*.¹² The present multifaceted lexeme in its translation into English, indicates on the functional plane various types of creativity — a singer, a jester, an organizer of popular recreational activities, a musical performer, while the generalized meaning of a *dzheguako* (in English transcription) comes closest of all to the word “performer” of the variety of *skalds*, the *ashugs* or the *akyns*. A prototype of the origins of the *dzheguako* may be considered to be the court and militia unit singer-poet, the types which had already existed among the Adyghe (Circassians) in the early Middle Ages. In Adyghe society, the *dzheguako* were quite free, they did not depend on the relations between suzerain and vassal, they were allowed to wear white Circassian coats (the customary clothing for the social elites). If a Circassian entered the threshold of a house, following the etiquette, he brought a dagger with him, while a *dzheguako* hung a *shikapshina* (musical instrument) on his belt, with which he went to war, or to various social events. The musical instrument on his belt meant that he was not a warrior, but a person carrying in himself the moral-ethical concepts of the *uork Khabze* and an apologist for traditional culture. At the stage of the development of folklore

when the genre of the heroic-historical song was formed, *dzheguakos* achieved high positions in society — universal love, unexampled authority, deep respect on the part of the entire population, including even the superior prince. Such evaluations of the society were merited by the song creators, who at times were communicative channels for inter-generational transmission of folk creativity, for the veracity of their depictions of important events and the characterizations of the protagonists in their songs, at the basis of which lay the artistic element and an emotional evaluation of their actions. The *dzheguako* frequently utilized metaphorical verbal clichés: “May our Karakashkatau be poured over with the blood of whom we hate,” “A bloody steam curls as a mist,” “My large steel scissors, o woe, I force to gnash as the teeth of the mothers of dogs,” etc.

While adhering to the customary function of the lexeme “collective character” in folk musical creativity, it is necessary to assert that in the Adyghe narrative genres (the *Nart* (epic and) heroic-historical songs) the aforementioned term is not sufficiently relevant. In this connection, the outstanding Kabardinian folklorist Zaur Naloyev asserts: “The formula ‘collective creativity’ is an imprecise one, because it leaves beyond its boundaries the work of the *dzheguakos*, the *oraduses*..., the female lamenters and the authors of songs about themselves.” [23, p. 135] Such a deduction on the part of the scholar discloses to a certain degree the special peculiarity of the appearance of the Adyghe folksong in which there occurs a re-accentuation of the correlation of the semantic element in the dichotomy of “*the collective vs.*

¹² *Dzheguako* — in a broad sense, this is a social institution and simultaneously a generic term (a “nickname”) for narrators of folk tales, creators of songs, and thinkers, who brought ethnic mental concepts to the people.

the individual.” The dzheguako, or another person, most often created individually, but artistic creativity could also have had collective origins, since two, three or more real professional song creators may have participated in a creative act, while the composition of a song itself took place in a synchronous regime and, as a rule, did not require further refinement, even though the oral character of the song’s existence inevitably created different versions of it. In other words, in the inter-generational process of existence of various forms of creativity, there could occur natural, yet insignificant changes, while at the same time the preservation of authorship as an objective fact remained important.

Conclusion

In recent decades, there have appeared in Adyghe folklore studies some remarkable research works on the subject herein discussed enriching the national scholarship. For example, of considerable interest is the topic of Liana Khagozheyeva’s dissertation for the degree of Candidate of the Arts *Nravstvenno-eticheskii kontent adygskogo fol'klora* [The Moral-Ethical Content of Adyghe Folklore]. [24] According to Raisa Unarokova and Madina Pashtova, “the present-day issues of Adyghe folk studies activate important vectors of its development, substantiating the choice of the top-priority directions.” [25, p. 59]

The phenomenological theme of the traditional culture of the Adyghes, presented here for the first time, brings out the personal aspect into the forefront. At the same time, while the generators of the act of artistic creativity are a group of master connoisseurs, among which even their own luminary master of ceremonies is appointed, there appears what is called in contemporary folklore studies a collective personality. In this connection, Adam Gutov fairly observes that “behind the back of the performer-retranslator there stands not only his teacher, ... but also the artist himself ... who created the song especially, after which it *departed into society and in time became a folksong*” (my italics. — B.A.). [21, p. 26]

Such is the lengthy path of the generation, dissemination, and development of the multiple-vector genre of the heroic-historical song. It has reflected, most notably, by its content the important periods of the history of the subcultural groups of the Adyghes, the character of the people’s traditional culture formed because of the solidarity of the social strata of the community, the dominating position in which was assumed by the noble estate. The cultural paradigm fixed in the Uork Khabza exists to a certain degree at the present time as well, being perceived as an aesthetical and artistic phenomenon in Adyghe culture.

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