

Rituals and Customs as a Reflection of the Folk Tradition

The Russian North in the Context of Culture

Magda Djichonaya

Institute of Slavic Culture

Russian State University named after A.N. Kosygin

Moscow, Russia

E-mail: magdalena-27@mail.ru

Abstract—The article is devoted to folklore traditions and is considered by the example of the Russian North. Ethno-cultural realities reflect the specifics of the structure of artistic culture and of the existence in it of authentic folklore.

Keywords—polyfunctionality of art; art in the context of culture; folk traditions; ethnic and cultural realities

I. INTRODUCTION

The specificity of the cultural and logical approach to the study of art lies in its consideration as part of a holistic socio-cultural space as a special sphere of human activity and, finally, as a cultural phenomenon in which the artistic and aesthetic values are accumulated.

Openness to artistic culture as a system lies in its ability to restrict and expand one's frame of graduation. This is manifested in the development of very different, sometimes even opposite trends. Very significant is the establishment of new ties and relationships between the qualitatively and quantitatively different elements of art and culture, forming its integrity.

The structure of artistic culture reflects the multi-functionality of art, which manifests itself in a special role in human life, in the development of society and culture, and in the process of the transformation of nature.

The appeal to art is the need for it and the degree of belonging to the art regarding human desire for spiritual self-determination and development of their creative potential.

Art is examined within the broader context of culture and determines form and the originality of its relationship with other spheres of spiritual life, folk and decorative art. This art is not regarded as a normal component in the culture system. It acts as a model of culture, which presents the main parameters of spiritual culture. The study of external and internal problems of this model's functioning offers an important issue of cultural studies.

In the context of folk tradition, let us consider the example of the Russian North, where these traditions are largely preserved in their authentic forms.

II. TRADITIONAL HOUSEHOLD WAY OF LIFE OF INHABITANTS OF THE ARKHANGELSK REGION

Russia's Arkhangelsk Region, for instance, due to its remoteness, is distinguished by preserved in the area unique centuries-old folk traditions. Its art presents the masterpiece of people and the perception in the mass. Folklore traditions are very well preserved, as handed down from generation to generation.

Description of nature, navigation, hunting, fishing, peculiarities of female labor, buildings, clothing, etc. contained numerous realities of everyday life of the fishing population of the Russian North, from which came the storytellers.

The key elements of the way of life of northerners — birth, holidays, crafts, wedding, death, etc. were accompanied by a certain traditional action, the rites. For instance, there is a colorful ceremony, common to the Leshukonsky and Mezensky Districts of the Arkhangelsk Region when "a girl gets up early in the morning to bake homemade cookies — 'Shangi', round, medium size holiday cakes. The girl must take the first baked Shanga and run through the village until meets the first man. She must ask his name. That will be the name of her future husband."

Essential Christmas amusements of the people in the Russian North included comic courtship and marriage. Widespread wedding games Russian new year's ceremony testifies to the importance of the topic of marriage.

As an element of folklore, very common divination was the evocation of visual images, including the most frequently practiced when "girls were looking into a glass of water or in the mirror trying to see a fiancé." The pattern of divination in general, coincides with fortunetelling in other areas. More rare divination is presented with a ring put in a glass of water, at which a girl must look until sees her future groom.

Guessing by interpretation of roosters' and sheep's behavior was widely spread. The cock was put in front of poured grain piles—from whose pile the cock pecks first, that girl soon was expected to get married.

In the Arkhangelsk districts the folks referring to entertainers called them ‘kulikoni’ or ‘silicone’.

According to peasants’, the silicone lived in water, where they were chosen before Baptism and settled in safe places. If silicone will dwell in the house, only a witch doctor can expel them.

III. RITUALS AND CUSTOMS

The richest in ritual elements is the holiday Mardi Gras. As shown by comparative analysis of Maslenitsa ceremonies in different Russian regions, the cycle of rituals was formed of the following composite actions: horse riding through a village or around it, sliding from mountains, the customs associated with the newlyweds, pancakes, fist fights and horse races. The last two practices are completely absent in the Arkhangelsk region. The rest of the customs have similarity within Russia, despite possessing some unique features. When riding, the guys had their favorite girls on their knees. In the villages, boys decorated horses with girls’ silk ribbons. Everywhere there were made ice slides for young and old. The Mezen villages, for instance, had the tradition of skating newlyweds — young couples living together less than a year.

Speaking about the family-ritual folklore it is essential to highlight conventions related to wedding. The Arkhangelsk region is very rich with various details of the wedding ceremony. Some of them are regarded as inherent only in the Northern Great Russians: washing of the bride in a bath and the related practice and folklore, theater and drama wedding submission, the sad savor of the ceremony, created through the bride’s lamentations.

Wedding laments offer one of the major and oldest Russian wedding poetry. They are considered an integral part of the wedding ‘scenario’.

According to reports, lamentations were performed by the bride. She had to wait at the wedding no matter how good or bad she was at it.

The Pinega area, as compared with its neighboring areas, had preserved a greater number of lamentations, due to many reasons. The Pinega wedding ceremony offers rather a complicated scenario with all wedding ritual details, including actions of ceremony participants and certain pieces of wedding poetry. Below is an example of such lamentation at a wedding ceremony in the Pinega district:

Darling, you're my sister,
come to sit under the oak.
And take a piece of paper
To write to you a raving letter.
Departed to my dear home town.
What we have today? And the house work,
Yes, the wedding dresses up.
Or
Darling, You're my bestie,

As to our porch,
And the porch to the indoor,
And chiseled,
And the rings gilded,
rode horses, good horses
And good savvy bells
And shaft bows
And they boldly approached,
And they loudly drove
To our house and came
My Dear and Sweetheart,
Eyes bright and soulful.

In the wedding lamentation in the Russian North a special role is assigned to the practice of bride’s bathing during which she is washing away her ‘charms’:

I didn't wash, nor splendid
With the mighty shoulders of water,
With zealous heart,
With white face, hot tears.
Only washed me, fair maiden,
I still have my own beauty,
And this ‘beauty’ flies out of bath with steam:
With a water thread and under the bench,
And fled away.

There is an indirect evidence that while being washed the bride was purged of a disease. In the past, there was a belief that if the newlyweds had some disease and while having them, were crowned, that disease is incurable. “When the bride and groom wore crowns during the ceremony and the priest said, “Crowned servant of God (so-and-so)”, the latter had to be baptized and say quietly: “I, the servant of God (so-and-so), crowned, and my diseases are not crowned”.

IV. EPIC AS A FORM OF FOLKLORE

It is known that public merrymaking and dancing were mostly preserved in the Russian North. In the late last century, this was almost they were almost completely ousted in Russia’s central regions by dances penetrating from towns. Traditional entertainment forms were especially preserved in the Mezen area.

Continuing the non-characteristics of folklore include tales from the epic. The predominance of the epic genre in Mezen area by chance.

Northern epics were quite different from those in Russia’s south, they were mainly monophonic, with a detailed plot, recitative melody, agnostic or strophical. Northern storytellers amongst fishermen, hunters, masters of

shipwork were the guardians of greatest epics. In the Russian North, there were three stylistic groups of epics: Onega (storytellers Ryabinkina, Surikova, Bogdanov, etc.), Onega–White Sea (Krivopolenova, Kryukov, the Ikonnikovs), and Mezen–Pechersk (Antonov, Shulgina, Chuprova). The Northern narrative tradition is mostly solo, but sometimes members of one dynasty sing chorally, backing the first singer's lead.

For example, the three-part epic version by Chuprevich of "Ilya of Murom and Sokolnik":

From a far distant town,
Near Kiev-town, twelve miles far off,
There lived bogatyr on the outpost...

In the context of epics there is one interesting and probably, ancient custom, repeatedly met in the Russian Northern villages. In each village, the patronal feast (once a year) featured a kind of round dances—two girls, hostesses of the holiday, arranged the rest of girls in a row one behind the other and tied together their handkerchiefs. Standing in front of singers, sometimes hired from other villages, the girls started to move around the village, certainly, sunwise. Singers sang three well-defined 'roundel' songs, performed only once a year during this particular holiday; the rest of girls walked in silence. Next the 'roundel' begins to sing dance games and songs.

It also should be mentioned about the development of such folklore genre as a short story. Judging by the fact that there is still the belief in domovoy (brownie) among the older generation, stories about this mythological house spirit were widespread in the past. The greatest number of true stories about house pertains to warming.

The question arises in this connection whether it is necessary to study folklore traditions, ethnic and cultural realities of the past? This is not an idle question, especially in the terms of improving university educational process and resolving the patriotic education problems.

One of the features of modern Russian society is a fast-growing diversity of economic development of individual regions and areas, a vivid manifestation of their cultural, ethnic and historical features. Under these conditions, the increases the call for educating local population and especially the new young generation about their land, history and cultural traditions, nature, economy, resources, ecological situation, plans for social and economic, cultural rebirth and development.

V. CONCLUSION

The study of social processes in a single region is closely, organically correlated to the knowledge of ethnic and national processes. Social would be always associated with national. Any local ethnic group would be a subject of the historical process. Via specific examples students learn about the history and traditions of people, about the heritage of other ethnic groups, the history of their settlement, their lifestyle, culture, national cultural traits, economic life and labor. Students gain insight on how in the crucible of

historical events, sometimes tragic, the people's awareness of spiritual unity, belonging to the Russian nation had formed.

The knowledge that students get during their field trips, ethnographic expeditions, talking with locals, old timers, recorded interviews – all these is likely to assist in arrangement and celebration of folklore festivals.

REFERENCES

- [1] O. N. Astafyeva, Postmodernism: man and technology in art and culture. Humanism at the turn of millennia: the idea, destiny, and perspective, M., 1997.
- [2] V. I. Belov, Essays on folk aesthetics. Arkhangelsk, 1985.
- [3] P. N. Goncharov, Expedition of the Folk Art Museum. NEILP in the Arkhangelsk region, 1975.
- [4] N. G. Gribulina, History of world culture. Part 1, 2 Tver, 1993.
- [5] S. I. Dmitrieva, Folklore and folk art of Russian European North. M., 1988.
- [6] Art in the culture system. SB. Articles, SPb., 1987.
- [7] B. S. Yerasov, Social cultural studies. M., 1996.
- [8] B. Y. Zambrowski, Origins of art. M., 1975.
- [9] V. M. Zkharov, Poetics of the Russian dance. In five volumes, 2004 to 2012.
- [10] A. A. Klimov, Russian folk dance of Northern Russia. 1996.
- [11] O. A. Krivtsun, Art and the world of man. M., 1989.
- [12] Mass Art and Modern Art Culture. M., 1986.
- [13] S. T. Makhlina. The Language of art in the context of culture. SPb., 1995.
- [14] V. N. Nigi, Dancing in Arkhangelsk region. 1970.
- [15] Ritual Poetics of Pinega. M., 1980.
- [16] Daily life in the Russian North. M., 2000.
- [17] The artistic life of modern society. In four volumes. SPb., 1997.