

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.34069/AI/2022.53.05.32>

How to Cite:

Dudareva, M.A., & Mukasheva, M.T. (2022). National existence in the cycle of R. Otarbayev's stories "Gosters from China". *Amazonia Investiga*, 11(53), 332-335. <https://doi.org/10.34069/AI/2022.53.05.32>

## National existence in the cycle of R. Otarbayev's stories "Gosters from China"

### НАЦИОНАЛЬНОЕ БЫТИЕ В ЦИКЛЕ РАССКАЗОВ «ГОСТИНЦЫ ИЗ КИТАЯ» Р. ОТАРБАЕВА

Received: April 15, 2022

Accepted: May 16, 2022

Written by:

**Marianna A. Dudareva**<sup>134</sup><https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4950-2322>

SPIN: 5362-0507

**Manshuk T. Mukasheva**<sup>135</sup><https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9085-8670>

#### Abstract

The object of the article is traditional and artistic Kazakh culture. The subject is the manifestation of the national tradition in the story "White Heavenly Butterflies" from the cycle "Hotels from China" by the modern Kazakh writer Rakhimzhan Otarbaev. The material for the article is the creative heritage of the writer. Much attention is paid to the folklore and Sufi traditions in the work, which are expressed both explicitly and implicitly. The research methodology is reduced to a holistic ontohermeneutical analysis aimed at highlighting the folklore, ethnographic paradigm of this story. Much attention is paid to the musical code in the story, since for the Kazakh culture music is the primary element from which the universe, the world tree, is born. The results of the study are to identify the cultural potential of the story of a modern Kazakh writer for further study of the national image of the world of Kazakhstan. The results of the work can also be used in teaching courses on the culture and literature of the peoples of Russia and the CIS countries, cultural studies, and philosophy.

**Keywords:** Kazakh culture and literature, folklore, Sufi tradition, symbol, national image of the world, R. Otarbaev.

#### Аннотация

Объектом статьи выступает казахская культура, традиционная и художественная. Предметом является проявление национальной традиции в рассказе «Белые небесные бабочки» из цикла «Гостинцы из Китая» современного казахского писателя Рахимжана Отарбаева. Материалом для статьи служит творческое наследие писателя. Большое внимание уделяется фольклорной и суфийской традиции в произведении, которые выразились как эксплицитно, так и имплицитно. Методология исследования сводится к целостному онтогерменевтическому анализу, направленному на высвечивание фольклорной, этнографической парадигмы данного рассказа. Уделяется большое внимание музыкальному коду в рассказе, поскольку для казахской культуры музыка является первоэлементом, из которой зарождается вселенная, мировое древо. Результаты исследования заключаются в выявлении культурного потенциала рассказа современного казахского писателя для дальнейшего изучения национального образа мира Казахстана. Результаты работы также могут быть использованы в преподавании курсов по культуре и литературе народов России и стран СНГ, культурологии, философии.

**Ключевые слова:** казахская культура и литература, фольклор, суфийская традиция, символ, национальный образ мира, Р. Отарбаев.

<sup>134</sup> Doctor of Culturology, Candidate of Philology, docent, Russian Language Department No. 2, Institute of the Russian language, RUDN University, Russian Federation.

<sup>135</sup> Candidate of Philological, Head of the Department of Journalism, Atyrau State University named after H. Dosmukhamedov, Kazakhstan.



## Introduction

It is always difficult to describe someone else's national cosmos, since a "journey" into a different national existence is equated with death: a researcher of culture must abstract from his national image of the world, in the language of G. D. Gachev, and sink beyond the waterline of national existence, approach other being. But, according to the scientist, this is always a "not graceful" and apophatic thing, since the researcher runs the risk of being dissolved in the apeiron of this culture: "the national character of a people, thought, culture is a very cunning and difficult to grasp matter. You feel that it exists, but as soon as you try to define it in words, it often disappears..." (Gachev, 2008, p. 46). However, due to the integrativity of cultural studies as a science, it is precisely for a cultural scientist that it is possible through literature, history, culture, philosophy to form a holistic view of someone else's national cosmos. As I. V. Kondakov notes, culturology "...doesn't quite fit into the theoretical discourse" and already includes such aspects of knowledge as artistry, philosophy, politics and associativity (Kondakov, 2005, p. 13), which indicates its syncretic nature. But it is precisely this syncretic character that makes it possible to turn to different spheres of humanitarian knowledge, different forms of art and penetrate deeply into the national existence of any people.

## Materials and methods

Reflections on the national image of the world of the Russian and Kazakh peoples in their comparative vein can also be productive in the ontohermeneutic analysis of the artistic cosmos of the two cultures, since both in Russia and Kazakhstan, literature is closely connected with the folklore tradition and mythological ideas about the world. Of course, the nature of this connection is different, the question always arises about the forms of folklorism (researchers have long raised the question of secondary and latent forms (Smirnov, 2001; Nalepin, 2009, pp. 280-281). But immersion in cultural poetics obliges the researcher to take into account this fact of on going cultural vertical transmission. Turning to the creative heritage of the modern Kazakh writer Rakhimzhan Otarbaev, known in Russia for the translations of his works published in thick literary magazines [Youth, 2016, Roman-gazeta, 2017 (Otarbaev, 2019b), we must apply the method of ontohermeneutic analysis aimed at identifying national "a priori" in his work, since Otarbaev belongs to the type of writers who are closely spiritually connected

with the history and even historiosophy of their people. In Russia, the writer became widely known precisely due to the publication of his story "The Lament of Genghis Khan" in the magazine "Youth": "In this work, the writer turns to his story, reflects on hoary antiquity, showing the problems of modernity through a large historical plan" (Dudareva, 2019, p.4). But this article is devoted to another famous cycle of the writer - "Gifts from China", translated into several languages of the world, and the central work from it - the story "White Heavenly Butterflies".

## Results

The plot of the story is extremely understandable and simple, from an everyday point of view: two lovers, Dauren, a trousers merchant at the bazaar, and Alima, who sells cheap water at the same bazaar, cannot be together, since everyone lives a hard poor life and each chooses acceptable conditions of existence. The young man betrays his beloved and marries, under pressure from his elders, the daughter of the owner of the bazaar, which turns into a tragedy for everyone, namely the death of Alima. This story, on the one hand, is about the difficult life and customs of the Kazakh people, on the other hand, it is about the moral choice of a person, about the spiritual side of life, which people forget about in the hustle and bustle of days. But there is something eternal that calls a person, apophatically manifests itself in the real life and reminds of itself through some details and symbols. We understand apophaticism here, following the thanatologist philosopher K. G. Isupov, as a property of being, as something incomprehensible, sacred, which prepares a person already in the bottom world for a meeting with the Other: "the extra-mundane meaning of the sacred Meeting "accumulates" in the bottom space sanctified being" (Isupov, 2010, pp. 558-559). In such an ontological context, the work turns out to be a semantically charged image-symbol of white butterflies - these are the souls of the ancestors, to which the girl Alima joins, and as a result of the tragedy, the main character Dauren. Butterfly as an intermediary between the world of the living and the dead, it is difficult to catch, but it is a symbol of the beauty of the world, inaccessibility and invisibility, the butterfly appears at the turning point in Dauren's life: a vision that came from another world. My eyes tingled, as if they were covered with apple flowers" (Otarbaev, 2019a, p. 740). The path of a hero is the path of a suffering, growing soul, the path of a butterfly.

What is the genealogy of this image in Otarbaev's story? Studying the early Kazakh folklore, we find the kuy of the same name "Köbelek", from which the dance subsequently grew, it was staged in 1959, and it entered the repertoire of the Kazakh State Philharmonic named after Zhambyla (Kaliyeva, 2017, p. 28). But, perhaps, Rakhimzhan Otarbaev, who knew folklore well, being a professional philologist, transferred this state of folk dance to the metaphor "the path of a butterfly", "circling / fluttering of a butterfly". Butterflies appear in Dauren's dream at the very beginning of the story: "Again chasing white butterflies, exhausted, withering his throat, he woke up" (Otarbaev, 2019a, p. 730). And this image is connected leitmotifically with the symbol of water, which the main character constantly lacks: "... Disappearing-appearing, arising-disappearing, he walked for a long time. Towards the market. And so every day. Thirst, unquenchable thirst haunts..." (Otarbaev, 2019a, p. 736). In addition, the reference, which precedes the story, to Ferdowsi's thought about the labor of an ant, his patience, which brings a sweet life, is interesting and not accidental, to which Saadi, another Sufi classic, also drew poetic attention:

How sweetly the impeccable Ferdowsi conveyed,

May his pure resting place be blessed,  
Don't disturb the ant dragging the seed  
Because he has a life and a sweet life. (Otarbaev, 2019a, p. 730)

The ontological state of the hero is hidden in the semantics of the name Dauren, it is also ambivalent: the young man, on the one hand, constantly thinks about the future, looking for a better life, selling trousers at the market, taking care of his piglet and how he would not be deprived of his income: "Dauren, whom we are talking about, was selling trousers in a huge bazaar in a big city. A huge bazaar, but on a small patch, where the basin of a skinny tomato trader could barely fit. He laid out in piles, causing ripples in his eyes, white, blue, black pants ..." (Otarbaev, 2019a, p. 731). On the other hand, he is in a state of eternity, merges with it, tormented by an unquenchable thirst (of love), when he meets the beautiful Alima, who supplies water: "Even souls were traded here, and he would never have entered this quagmire of his own free will ... But here was Alima. The same girl selling water at the entrance to the bazaar, between whose eyebrows exactly in the middle there is a mole the size of a millet grain. Yes, yes, she! Every time I sold trousers, I drank her water

several glasses in a row" (Otarbaev, 2019a, p. 732). The situation is archetypal in nature - the water is tasty (for a young man, a potential groom), it quenches thirst when the hero is in love, loves this world and is satisfied with little, although for others it is yellow and unusable (this is how Syrgaly, the daughter of the owner of the bazaar, characterizes her).

Water in Kazakh folklore is associated with life and death, it can bestow immortality. Let us recall the Kazakh fairy tale about Iskander and the water of immortality, which the hero could not drink, because, although he conquered the whole world, he didn't overcome human vices (Kostyukhin, 1972, p. 157). But this Kazakh tale is free from moralizing, "reproaches to Iskander for greed and insatiability" (Kostyukhin, 1972, p. 157), the reader himself draws a conclusion. So Rakhimzhan Otarbaev doesn't condemn the hero, but subtly leads the reader to comprehend the moral choice of Dauren, on the one hand, betraying his beloved Alima, who was expecting a child from him, on the other hand, marrying the rich daughter of the owner of the bazaar for the material prosperity of his family, old mother.

The symbolism of water is closely connected with the sound musical code in the story - Alima laughs loudly when Dauren comes to her for water. The girl's laughter is likened to a ringing that awakens love in the hero's soul: "There was a ringing laugh. Not just laughter, but the sound of broken glassware that filled the air. Since then, he began to look not for water, but for this ringing, pleasing to his ear. Ringing! – and now, invisible to the eye, it splashed in the air" (Otarbaev, 2019a, p. 732). In Sufi religious beliefs, which greatly influenced Kazakh culture, much attention is paid to sound, music: "music becomes" suitable for souls" and is able to influence them by virtue of its correspondence to what is already in the soul" (Fedorova, 2014, p. 68). Dauren's soul was already in anticipation of love, the hero was constantly thirsty, which sounds like a leitmotif in every part of the story. After meeting with Alima, Dauren hears this wonderful ringing that makes him live, but after his betrayal, the hero ceases to be attached to the music of the spheres and therefore his being tends to death: "I smiled, but the glassware did not break. She surrounded herself with an invisible sadness" (Otarbaev, 2019a, p. 737). Sufi philosopher Hazrat Inayat Khan notes: "He who knows the secret of sound knows the secret of the whole universe. The sound of the abstract always continues inside, around and around a person. As a rule, a person does not hear him

because his consciousness is completely focused on material existence” (Khan, 1997, p. 342).

“The artistic thinking of the people is intertwined with its ethical ideas, clothing the ethical views of people in specific sensual images merged with such ideals as honor, valor, nobility, kindness” (Kulbekova, 2008, p. 255), notes the researcher of the culture of the Kazakh folk dance. So, in the story with the symbolic title "White Heavenly Butterflies" life and being are intertwined, where the latter is manifested through symbols, secret signs sent by Allah to the hero on the path of his tariqa. The task of Rakhimzhan Otambaev as an artist is to lead the reader to a moral choice, and not to condemnation. The path/dance of the white butterfly is the path of the human soul in the realm of two worlds.

### Conclusion

Immersion in the national space of Kazakhstan through literature, namely the works of the modern writer Rakhimzhan Otambaev, is productive in terms of cultural comparison of different national images of the world, in our case, Russian and Kazakh life. The prose of the modern writer is deeply symbolic, inspired by the national folklore tradition, filled with Sufi symbolism, which creates an ontological plan in the story "White Heavenly Butterflies". Exits to the symbolic space are carried out with the help of the image-symbol of white butterflies, the motif of water and unquenched thirst, the sound (glassy laughter of a girl) associated with the music of the national cosmos.

### Bibliographic references

- Dudareva, M. (2019). You can live without premiums. about contemporary literature and Rakhimzhan Otambaev. *Amazonia Investiga*, 8(23), pp. 4–5. Retrieved from <https://amazoniainvestiga.info/index.php/amazonia/article/view/922>
- Fedorova, E. S. (2014). Music in Sufi ritual practice. *Islamic Studies*, No. 3, pp. 65–71. (In Russian)
- Gachev, G. D. (2008). The mentality of the peoples of the world. Moscow: Algorithm; Eksmo. 544 p. [https://litgu.ru/knigi/guman\\_nauki/127778-mentalnosti-narodov-mira.html](https://litgu.ru/knigi/guman_nauki/127778-mentalnosti-narodov-mira.html)
- Isupov, K. G. (2010). Apophatic M. M. Bakhtin. Russian philosophical culture. SPb.: University book. pp. 557–567.
- Kaliyeva, G. D. (2017). Trends in the development of folk dance art of Kazakhstan in modern conditions: final qualifying work. Chelyabinsk, 62 p.
- Khan, H.I. (1997). The mysticism of sound. Moscow: Sphere. 336 p.
- Kondakov, I.V. (2005) Modern transformations of Russian culture. Moscow: Science. 751 p. [In Russian]
- Kostyukhin, E. A. (1972). Alexander the Great in Literary and Folk Tradition. Moscow: The main editorial office of oriental literature of the publishing house "Nauka". 190 p. (In Russian)
- Kulbekova, A. K. (2008). Content aspects of the Kazakh folk dance. *Vestnik MGUKI*. No. 3, pp. 253–257. (In Russian)
- Nalepin, A. L. (2009). Two centuries of Russian folklore: Experience and comparative coverage of approaches in folklore studies in Russia, Great Britain and the USA in the 19th – 20th centuries. Moscow: IMLI RAN. 504 p. (In Russian)
- Otambaev, R. (2019a). White sky butterflies. *Anthology of contemporary Kazakh prose* (National Translation Bureau). Moscow: Publishing house "Moscow University". pp. 729–740.
- Otambaev, R. (2019b). Rejected world. *Youth*, No. 2, pp. 52–56.
- Smirnov, V. A. (2001). Literature and folklore tradition: questions of poetics (archetypes of the "feminine principle" in Russian literature of the XIX - early XX centuries): Pushkin. Lermontov. Dostoevsky. Bunin. Ivanovo: Juno, 234 p.