

Available online at www.sciencedirect.com**ScienceDirect**

Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences 122 (2014) 72 – 76

Procedia
Social and Behavioral Sciences2nd World Conference on Design, Arts and Education DAE-2013

Social Information Exchange in Aitys Performances

Madiyar Saudbayev^a, Berdak Bayimbetov^a, Bauyrzhan Karipov^b^a*Suleyman Demirel University, Abylaikhan str. 1/1, Kaskelen, 040900, Kazakhstan*^b*L.N.Gumilyov Eurasian National University, Astana, 010008, Kazakhstan*

Abstract

This article studies the historical formation of communication in Kazakhstan. The appearances of forms of journalism dates back as long as some traditions of Central Asian nations, which means there were some forms of modern communications used by Kazakh nation until the launch of today's media. One of the traditions, which functioned in the history as a communication tool, is "aitys".

A word of "aitys" has meanings of telling, debating, describing and competing. This is Kazakh tradition of eloquence or a kind of speech mastery competition that serve to deliver information and various messages. This function of aitys somehow copies the roles of mass media. However, until now, this genre was studied only as a part of folklore and literature. This work analyses aitys functions as social communication tool and journalism, which has been developing for centuries by nomad Kazakh nation.

© 2013 The Authors. Published by Elsevier Ltd. Open access under [CC BY-NC-ND license](http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/).

Selection and peer-review under responsibility of Academic World Education and Research Center.

Keywords: communication; media; social information exchange; journalism history; aitys; akhyn; Kazakh; poetry; Kazakhstan

1. Introduction

Despite the fact that the scholars of Soviet system admitted several functions of information as news, they firmly held their position on declaring that the information mainly serves as a propaganda, admonition and organization. For that reason, almost all experts of USSR, such as, Prokhorov E.P., Yurovski A.Ya., Boretzki P.A., Afanasiev B.G. and Zdorovega V.I. studied the journalism from the point of Lenin's course: "newspaper – community agitator, community propagator and community organizer" and shaped the theory of Soviet journalism from this angle. However, the western experts of 20th century, Benedict Anderson, Jürgen Habermas, Marshall McLuhan, Walter Ong and Amartya Sen, etc., thoroughly examined the roles of news in society and created their theoretical bases.

Correspondingly, being under the direct influence of Russia for about 150 years, Soviet Kazakh journalism could not pass over that communist viewpoint, though some researchers such as Amandosov Tawman, Bekkhozhin Khalizhan, Barmankulov Marat and others developed the other functions and genres

1 Corresponding author name: Madiyar Saudbayev Tel.: 324679098

E-mail address: madiyar@hotmail.com

of it. Yet, from the mentioned point of view, this sphere is not studied well enough. For instance, the positions and rules of those theorists did not ever mention the information exchange roles of some folklore of nomad Kazakh people.

Since the purpose of Russian Kingdom was a colonization of the Central Asia, scientists of that time considered them as aborigines and did not pay much attention to the communication values of those nomad people. This approach was not changed even after the October Revolution. Moreover, the more the Soviet system and the communist party flourished, the more it restricted the horizons of freedom of Kazakh researchers' thinking. For that reason, during the Soviet empire, it was not always easy for free-thinking scholars to talk about the issues beyond that restricted frame. Besides, the whole territory of USSR was closed for foreign researchers to change that view.

Exactly, this policy restrained Kazakh researchers from thoroughly studying their own history and traditions. Namely, for this reason, they considered "aitys" (improvisational poetry) only as folklore, without learning it from different angles. In reality, it played an important role in information exchanging in the life of nomad steppe people.

2. Aitys – social information exchange

This article defines *aitys* from new approaches, as an information delivering tool, which played a significant role in information exchange in nomad Kazakh society, (a) from the perspective of journalistic genre system, as well as (b) from the concepts of scientists those studied it only as folklore. Together with examining the abovementioned thoughts, we put a new concept in this line, analyzing *aitys* as a media tool and a new journalistic genre, which always provided society with news.

Generally, each individual builds his own world and culture according to the information gained by those kinds of activities: studying, acquiring, hearing, seeing and listening. In its turn, this process causes the separation of folks and peoples, motivates them to create of customs and traditions. Certainly, these views and cultures have been changing and developing according to the alterations of surroundings, lifestyle, and peculiarities.

Such kind of peculiar characteristics and rich culture of Kazakh nation have been also being shaped since a long period. One of these cultural peculiarities is a mastery of speech – eloquence (*sheshendik öner*). A distinctive folk wisdom, Kazakh eloquence is a valuable heritage and wealth that is shaped in the course of centuries. We can see the initial samples of these eloquences in oral folk literature works, tales, legends, eposes, dastans (*poetic romans*). Singing of *zhyrau* (*people who deliver the message in poetic songs and epics*), *aitys* and proverbs played a significant role in the growth of this speech mastery. Well known foreign celebrities and scientists highly valued the Kazakh eloquence. Knight (2008) mentions, poetry writing requires a selection and ordering of words, phrases and thoughts – as do history and journalism.

A word of "*aitys*" has meanings of telling, debating, describing and competing. In the science of Kazakh folklore it is a type of rhetorics to depict the people's life. Akhmetov & Yskakov (1965) mention that "It describes the joy, sorrow, social-political life of people, current ideology, customs and traditions, general social and individual relations, and the forms of argument according to their particular time." Although, the primordial *aitys* was performed only orally, later the lyrics were supported with *dombra* (stringed instrument). It is said that the initial source of *aitys* began from the traditional singings of "zhar-zhar" (*Kazakh traditional farewell song*) and "badik" (*the oldest type of aitys, Kazakh traditional singing for sick or troubled person in shamanistic way, before Islam*). This form of *aitys* still exists; however, because of the entrance of Islam to the Central Asia, the content of singing took some courses to a religious way, which is known as "*Din aitys* (religious *aitys*)." The purpose of religious *aitys* was to explain the rules and regulations of Islam to ordinary people, but, because of Soviet atheistic ideology this genre was restricted lately.

In the science of Kazakh folklore "Aytis is a type of culture that presents the lifestyle of people. It demonstrates the joy, grief, social-political lifestyle, cultural level, ideology, customs and traditions, general-social and personal relationships among the people" (Auezov, 1991).

“*Aitys* is a syncretic genre that initially started from singings of customs and traditions and continued as word battle of *akhyns*. For this reason, *aitys* is rich of lyric, epic and dramatic descriptions. Through this way, this genre was developed simultaneously with other types of oral folklore by influencing and complementing each other. Furthermore, it became an expanded area of oral literature, impacting to the improvement of heroic and lyrical epic poems as well” (Radlov, 1870). Serving to share the joy and happiness of nomad people, *aitys* had been as today’s favourite theatre show in their various festivals, weddings, and other different traditional merriments. The public, being witnessed of resourcefulness and quick-wittedness of two competing *akhyns* in order to win the contest, takes one side and support him/her by applauding and approving their given facts and arguments. Certainly, funny, aesthetical and pleasurable features of *aitys* definitely affect people to be active in such contests.

3. Journalistic concepts of *aitys*

Regarding to the journalistic conceptions, Amandosov T., who conducted the first researches on Kazakh journalism, notes about the genres: “They are divided according to the content, type and style of materials” (Amandosov, 1978). A contemporary researcher, Kaken Khamzin (2012), divides journalistic genres based on the theories of Amandosov’s works: a) news genre, chronicle, information, expanded news, interview, report, reportage, special reportage, press questionnaires; b) analytic genres: report, commentary, article, letter, summary, discussion, review, memo c) artistic-literal genres, artistic-journalistic commentaries, essay, feature story, satirical article, pamphlet, guide sketch d) show: plays, observations, reality-shows, and others.” As Knight (2008) mentioned, poetry is often as plain-spoken as good journalism, and in general, poets strive for clarity and precision, which are found in the newspaper. However, although abovementioned works studied the theory of journalism in details, both researchers did not ever mention about *aitys*, and its aspects in relation to the information exchange, shaped for the centuries in the lifestyle of Kazakh people.

In Kazakh society, *aitys* served talented people as an opportunity to show their abilities and to be known as *akhyns*. Mainly, there is a strict rule for *akhyn* acts; if they lose their previous competition, they have to inform about it to others in the places where they perform the next time. Certainly, this is also delivered in poetic way during the performances. Because of the popularity of such competitions, some *aitys* works of good *akhyns* had been formed as ballads and legends in logical systematic way.

According to Kazakh expert, Barmankulov M. (1979), who has been studying television, “TV reportage is different from newspaper reportage, since it is shown, heard and it requires a journalist, to be ready for any spontaneities.” This certainly reminds us the pure *aitys*. As for the poetry, Knight (2008) argues, “Newspaper stories tell us about names and titles, distances and populations, fatality totals and investigations,” he writes. “Poems tell us about ourselves.”

For instance, Arman *akhyn* tells people about the Kazakh-Russian relationship, and language and cultural connections in the following ways:

Maskeuding shykhkhannan song törine biz,
 Aitaiykh alkhalı yelge zhöndi lebiz.
 Aitystyng osy yelde boluyna,
 Dostyghy orys-kazakh boldy negiz.
 Orys-Kazakh ezhelden tamyr bolghan,
 Ol zhaily derekterdi mol bilemiz.
 Orysty syilaghandykh osy yemes pe,
 Putinning portretin törge ilemiz.
 Kazakhstandykh kazakhtar bizder ushin,
 Orys-Kazakh tilderi boldy yegiz.
 Oryssha shuldirlesip özimizshe,
 Shabymyz shart ketkenshe sögilemiz.
 Kazakhsha tusinbeitin Kazakh khyzyn,

In the honored place of Moscow
 Let’s wish the people goodness.
 Because this people came to this *aitys*,
 Wishing the Russian-Kazakh friendship.
 Russian-Kazakh have roots from long ago,
 We know many favorable facts about it.
 We respect Russians,
 We also hang Putin’s portrait in an honored place.
 For us, Kazakhstani Kazakhs,
 Russian and Kazakh languages are twins.
 We speak Russian all the time,
 It’s as if we’ve made a contract,
 If a Kazakh girl doesn’t know Kazakh,

Oryssha areng-areng köndiremiz.

We barely chat her up in Russian.*

As we can see, Arman using the chance of describing the Russian-Kazakh relations, he humorously uncovers the problems those related to Kazakh language and the influence of official Moscow on Kazakhstan's policy. Likewise, just like modern journalism, *aitys* covers almost all spheres and issues that concern the life of ordinary people.

Academic Radlov (1870) used to investigate and gather the mastery of Kazakh eloquence. According to him, after thorough studying this field, he understood the purity and naturalness of this language very well, admitting the special impact on himself of the resourcefulness and speech mastery of Kazakhs. He writes, "Kazakhs... speak fluently, smoothly and at a peculiar higher tempo. They explain their thoughts clearly and precisely. It is striking that when Kazakhs talk they use matching words in so rhythmic order; you may think that they are singing a pre-composed song."

Especially, the vast field of this eloquence is consisted with *aitys* of *akhyns*. *Aitys* is a big wealth of Kazakh oral literature, people's beautifully wonderful skill with rich traditions, which is uncommon for other nations, dating back to long history and still existing together with Kazakh nation. It sings only the truth and reality, and is generated right in the course of performance. "The competition between two *akhyns*, which usually starts with mockery of each other, actually tells about important governmental issues, compares the past and present, describes the social occurrences with elocution, and composes the truth of epoch. That is because the *akhyns* of *aitys* are considered as heralds of their times" (Zholdasbekov, 2008).

4. Old democratic approaches to debates

Journalistic quality includes quickly delivering the news and events to the public, and forming their opinion about the cases. As it was mentioned, these characteristics also apply to *aitys*, because in both functions *akhyns* are successful when they do that professionally.

Aitys can be done between old and young, man and woman, child and adult, for instance, well-known *akhyn* and beginner teenager – all can freely try and compete with each other without any limits. Kazakh people have no critics about the absence of proportionality in *aitys*. Because of this imbalance, some *akhyns*' rude and sometimes offensive words addressing to their opponents, usually, are not considered as a fault or misconduct. Inversely, people expect the opposite side to "punish" and win by using even sharper and stronger arguments. For example, a young teenager *akhyn*, Sabirbay, used to freely tell the piercing words to Zhanakh, who was in about the age of Sabirbay's grandfather. Certainly, in normal talking that young *akhyn* would not even dare to talk with Zhanakh in that manner because of local ethical norms. That "attack" of *akhyns* can be explained in the way that during the *aitys* *akhyns*' single purpose is to win their opponent with such facts, pressing them psychologically. For this reason, *akhyns* consider those kinds of "jokes" excusable. This feature and rule of this competition is regarded as the freedom of thinking and speech, to which journalism usually strives.

5. Conclusion

Generally, the following common media functions can be applied to Journalism and *aitys*:

1. Various events, facts and situations are delivered to audience as information and news;
2. Serves to improve the outlook and knowledge of people educating them with cultural, historical and scientific definitions;
3. Shaping the social opinion and widening their mental horizons offering open discussions about communal, political, economic and other issues related to life experiences.

Professor Dubuisson (2009) mentions that "The particular *aitys* genre of *zhekpe-zhek* (one-to-one, which he also refers to as simply *shyndykh*, truth) allows poets to speak openly because they can relay

* Cited and translated by Dubuisson Eva-Maria.

information about the political situation, “who is who and what is happening.” As a result of *aitys*, he noted, people living in the country now have access to a lot of new information.” Considering this point of view, it can be said, that *aitys* of those times functioned as today’s mass media (TV, radio) that could entertain people, informed them about the occurrence, taught mass on religion, ethics, and other norms. One of the famous *akhyns* Asiya Berkenova says that *aitys* serves to improve the public life. For example, according to her “*Aitys* played an important role during the policy of reviving Kazakh national traditions, celebrations, and names of Kazakh heroes” (TV programme, 2010).

Thorough analysis of the *aitys*’ functions and its influences on audiences imply that it can definitely stand to be considered not only as a genre of folklore, but also as an old appearance of journalism. Knight (2008) writes, “What distinguishes poetry from journalism, aside from obvious distinctions of form – uses of words, patterns of words, sequences of words – is not a difference in kind but a difference in focus. Journalism is concerned with the look of the world; poetry with the feel of the world.” The content of *aitys* always based on the circumstances, policies and many other conditions of nation.

References

- Ahmetov Shegen pen Baltash Yskakov, (1965), «*Aitys*» I-tom Almaty, 7-8.
- Amandosov T., (1978), *Sovet Zhurnalistikasynyng teorijasy men praktikasy*. Almaty, 45.
- Auezov, M. (1991). *History of literature*, Almaty, 1991. 172-173.
- Barmankulov, M.K., (1979), *Zhurnalistika dlya vseh: Obshnost i specifika zhanrov pechati, televideniya i radioveshaniya*. Almaty.
- KazakhTV/Caspionet, (2010), Interview on TV programme “*Asyl khazyna*”.
- Khamzin Kaken, (2012), «*Zhurnalistika negizderi*» Almaty, 35.
- Knight, Bill, (2008), *Poetry and Journalism*, IJPC Journal, Annenberg School for Communication & Journalism, University of Southern California.
- Radlov, V.V., (1870), *Obrazcy narodnoi literatury turkskih plemen, zhivushih v uzhnoi Sibiri i Dzhungarskoi stepi*, Spb., 45.
- Zholdasbekov, Myrzatai, (2008), “*Khazakhqa allanyng bergen syiy edi*”, *Egemen Kazakhstan*, No.4787