

Examples Of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Mahmud Al-Kashgari's "Dīwān Lughāt Al-Turk"

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Abstract: This article analyzes, from historical-cultural and ethnolinguistic perspectives, information related to intangible cultural heritage preserved in "Dīwān Lughāt al-Turk" by Mahmud al-Kashgari, one of the major representatives of eleventh-century Turkic scholarship. In addition to its function as a dictionary, the work is shown to contain folk proverbs, aphoristic expressions, songs and poetic fragments, concepts related to rituals, traditional knowledge, terminology connected with labor and crafts, folk games, and perceptions of the natural world. It is argued that the author's practice of explaining word meanings by linking them to the real life of the people made the "Dīwān" an important written source for studying the cultural memory of Turkic peoples.

Keywords: Mahmud al-Kashgari, "Dīwān Lughāt al-Turk", intangible cultural heritage, folklore, proverb, v proverb, custom, ritual, traditional knowledge, folk games, craftsmanship, Turkic peoples.

INTRODUCTION

Understanding cultural heritage solely as a collection of architectural monuments, archaeological finds, or material objects is insufficient. The knowledge accumulated by a people over centuries, examples of oral creativity, rituals and customs, performance practices, and traditional skills also shape its historical and cultural identity. In international scholarly and legal practice, such values are considered within the concept of "intangible cultural heritage." The 2003 UNESCO Convention identifies oral traditions, performing arts, customs, rituals and festive events, knowledge concerning nature and the universe, as well as skills associated with traditional craftsmanship as the principal domains of intangible cultural heritage.[1]

Ancient and medieval written sources are of particular importance in studying the history of the intangible cultural heritage of the Uzbek people. One such source is Mahmud al-Kashgari's "Dīwān Lughāt al-Turk." The work is distinguished by bringing together extensive information on the language, living environment, occupations, social relations, and artistic thought of eleventh-century Turkic tribes. Some of the examples of intangible cultural heritage encountered in the work continue to be used today.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND METHODOLOGY

The "Dīwān Lughāt al-Turk" of Mahmud al-Kashgari, an encyclopedic scholar and author who lived in the eleventh century, contains a great wealth of valuable information on the life, way of living, and languages of Turkic tribes. The author traveled, one by one, across vast territories extending from Upper China through the whole of Transoxiana, Khorezm, Fergana, and Bukhara, and recorded important information about the clans, tribes, and peoples inhabiting these regions, as well as their occupations and economic traditions. In this article, the principal emphasis is placed not on the phonetic changes found in the work, but on revealing examples of intangible cultural heritage related to nature and the universe, agriculture, animal husbandry, and craftsmanship. The work was created as a result of the author's many

years of research and travel. For the present day, it is one of the reliable sources providing information about the period in which the author lived, the living conditions of people, their economic activities, and their patterns of speech.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

At the beginning of the eleventh century, Mahmud al-Kashgari used the term “Argu” as an ethnic designation referring to a union of seven tribes. In Mahmud al-Kashgari’s “*Dīwān Lughāt al-Turk*,” one can find not only information about Turkic clans and tribes, their social conditions, and their language, but also data concerning the geography, metrology, and astronomy of various regions. In describing spring, the work states that birds and insects came back to life with the pleasant spring wind; males and females gathered, spread out in groups, and no longer returned to their nests. This shows that the author emphasized the arrival of spring, the warming of the weather, and the renewed activity of living creatures. He also recorded that one of the twelve names used for years among Turkic peoples was “jund,” whose lexical meaning corresponds to “horse.” The work also contains valuable information indicating that, taking into account the loss of weight among livestock during spring, meat was mixed with various aromatic herbs and dried in autumn so that flavorful meat could still be eaten in spring. From this information, one may conclude that preparations for consuming good-quality meat in spring began in autumn. These materials allow us to learn about traditions of salting, drying, and preserving meat.

The work also discusses rain, one of the natural phenomena, and uses the form “jamg‘ur” for this word. The author describes rainfall as follows: the clouds spread their white net and poured rain upon the sky. In this context, he cites a proverb: “However old a garment may be, it is useful in the rain.” This once again demonstrates that natural phenomena and human life were always interconnected and that natural conditions played a distinctive role in the development of economic activities.

When discussing the seasons of the year, Mahmud al-Kashgari gives a special description of summer. With the arrival of summer, rams and male goats were separated from the females; milking ewes were gathered for milking, and their udders filled and overflowed with milk. Lambs mingled with their mothers. In describing this process, the author also alludes to the abundance and auspiciousness of the summer season. The expression encountered in field notes, “livestock recognize one another by smelling each other,” is also used by the author in his work, which indicates the continuity of such ideas among local communities familiar with this cultural tradition.

One of the phenomena frequently observed in nature is the storm. The author also addresses this phenomenon, referring to the strongest and most severe storms observed in nature as “qaz.” He even recorded that such storms could claim human lives.[2] The work also refers to birds and includes a dialogue between summer and winter. Summer says to winter: “The sava flees from you. Swallows and other birds stay with me. With me, the nightingale delights people with its pleasant singing. Throughout the summer, male and female birds pair with one another.” In figurative form, the author thus substantiates the revival of all existence in summer and the continuity of generations.

An important feature of traditional knowledge is its practical character. A herder made decisions by observing the condition of animals, the state of pastures, and the weather, while a farmer took into account the land, water, and seasonal changes. Such experience was transmitted from generation to generation through direct practical activity and oral instruction. One of the richest and most detailed areas of animal husbandry represented in “*Dīwān Lughāt al-Turk*” is horse breeding. Research notes that numerous words and proverbs related to horses are recorded in the work and that the horse occupied a special place in the life of Turkic peoples in connection with the economy, transport, warfare, and social status.[3] For example, “at” means horse, “adg‘ır” means stallion, and “arkun” is explained as a swift horse born from a wild stallion and a domestic mare. The verb “atlan-” means to mount a horse, while “atgar-” means to put someone on horseback. These lexical units indicate that horse breeding was not merely the keeping of animals but a system of specialized practical knowledge concerning the selection, use, and handling

of horses.

Terms used to distinguish the external appearance and physical condition of a horse are also important. For example, “yal” denotes a horse’s mane, while “ulag” denotes a horse used as a riding or pack animal; “yag‘ir” refers to a sore on the back of a horse, mule, or donkey caused by a saddle or load. The verb “yag‘irla-” indicates that practical experience existed in treating such injuries.[4]

Another manifestation of intangible heritage related to horse breeding consists of skills connected with training, riding, and entering horses in races. The use of the unit “atlash-” in the sense of staking a horse and entering into a contest or competition shows that traditions of horse-related contests and competitions existed. From a modern perspective, such experience may be evaluated as part of traditional sports and skills.

The materials on animal husbandry in “Dīwān Lughāt al-Turk” can be systematized into three main groups: traditional knowledge, practical skills, and examples of oral culture. This approach expands the linguistic value of the work and at the same time turns it into an important source for ethnology, folklore studies, cultural studies, and research on intangible cultural heritage.

CONCLUSION

“Dīwān Lughāt al-Turk” contains examples corresponding to all the main domains of intangible cultural heritage in the UNESCO classification: oral creativity (proverbs, elegies, debates, heroic or battle narratives), systems of reckoning years and knowledge concerning nature, socio-domestic terminology, and the lexicon of craftsmanship. The work is a unique written source preserving the language, beliefs, values, and worldview of eleventh-century Turkic peoples, and it should therefore be studied beyond the confines of lexicography. The results of the analysis show that the work can be used as a foundational source in the study, safeguarding, and popularization of intangible cultural heritage.

The materials in the “Dīwān” clearly demonstrate how the cultural experience of a people is preserved through language. Proverbs and aphorisms preserve ethical experience, songs and poems preserve aesthetic thought, ritual terminology reflects social relations, while words related to nature and economic life preserve practical knowledge. Accordingly, the work is an important source for a comprehensive study of the historical layers of the intangible culture of Turkic peoples. In future research, it would be appropriate to compare the materials of “Dīwān Lughāt al-Turk” with contemporary elements of intangible cultural heritage preserved in the territory of Uzbekistan. In particular, the historical continuity of proverb traditions, folk games, rituals, traditional craftsmanship, and knowledge related to animal husbandry may become subjects of separate studies.

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