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**ISSUES OF ETHNIC IDENTITY IN WORLDVIEW AND  
CREATIVE OUTPUT OF CHINGIZ AYTMATOV**

Alieva Sono Abdimamatovna (a)\*, Mustafina Ramzia Davletkulovna (b),  
Gareeva Gulfira Nigamatovna (c), Galliamov Azamat Abdrakhmanovich (d),  
Akhmadrakhimova Olesya Vakiliyevna (e)

\*Corresponding author

(a) Bashkir State University, 32, Zaki Validi Str., Ufa, Russia, sono.alieva@mail.ru

(b) Bashkir State University, 32, Zaki Validi Str., Ufa, Russia, ramzia7@rambler.ru

(c) Bashkir State University, 32, Zaki Validi Str., Ufa, Russia, gareevagulfira@mail.ru

(d) Bashkir State University, 32, Zaki Validi Str., Ufa, Russia, azamat56@gmail.com

(e) Bashkir State University, 32, Zaki Validi Str., Ufa, Russia olesyaahmadrakhimova@mail.ru

**Abstract**

In this paper, the principal attention is paid to studying various aspects reflecting ethnic identity in world view and literary as well as journalistic prose of Chingiz Aytmatov. Relevance of the study is determined by the fact that identity issues have become a global problem of today, puzzling not just individual persons, but whole social groups, communities and states. In the modern science–psychology, ethnic education studies, cultural studies, philosophy, history, ethnography, sociology, local history–studying the issues of ethnic identity, inter-cultural engagement, mutual enrichment of cultures, tolerance in communication are getting much attention and quite reasonably studied. During the recent decades, more and more specialists in literature studies, folklore studies and linguistics turn their attention to the question of ethnic identity. Despite the fact that many Russian and foreign researchers were involved in deep and multi-aspect studies of Chingiz Aytmatov's oeuvres, the concept of reflection on ethnic identity in his literary and journalistic works is still understudied. This constitutes novelty of the present work. The study is based on several research methods; systemic (complex) method considers the object as a system, a holistic set of interrelated elements; analytic method is used to analyze literary and journalistic genres in the writer's works; comparative method is used to compare common literary phenomena with creative output of some other contemporary authors. Thus, the purpose of this paper is a detailed and complex study of aspects of ethnic identity as reflected in works of Chingiz Aytmatov, where this aspect finds vivid actualization.

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*Keywords:* Chingiz Aytmatov, ethnic, identity, journalism, world view



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## 1. Introduction

In the modern world, cultural identities (ethnic, national, religious, civilizational) take a central position, while "unions, antagonisms and state policy are formed with considerations for cultural proximity and cultural distinctiveness" – states Huntington in his most famous book (Huntington, 2004).

Scholars analyze ethnic identity as a component of personal social identity, understanding of one's belonging to a certain ethnic community. This community, in its own turn, is being defined by parents' belonging, place of birth, language, culture (Smith, 1986).

For most people, social identity that allows them to obtain the feeling of *Us* is related to one's place of birth (Giddens, 1991). The latter (on condition of continuing habitation) has been always serving as a determinative factor in formation of cultural, historical, social and territorial communality of people and has been participating in definition of their subethnic identity. In addition, until today's global migration processes became a thing, one's place of birth was strongly related to the concept of Motherland.

## 2. Problem Statement

Researchers are especially interested in constructing such a model on the creative output of ethnic authors, where specifics of artistic perception have been largely determined by self-identification process (Calhoun, 1997, 1998).

Chingiz Aytmatov was a representative of a monoethnic identity, as he was born in a family where parents were of different ethnicities but of the same racial and linguistic group. That is, by place of birth, language, upbringing and culture, the writer undoubtedly identified with his people and his *us-identity* was sharply reflected in both his literary and journalistic output. However, these aspects of his literary and journalistic activity stay beyond the interest of researchers.

## 3. Research Questions

*Us-identity* of Aytmatov is especially vivid in one of his speeches titled *Ode to the Republic*: "We live in the mountains and between the mountains in valleys... This is our fatherland – Ala-Too... *Meken* means motherland in Kyrgyz, *tagdyr* means fate: *Mekenimdin tagdyry* – it means the fate of my Motherland! ... who is he, whose soul is not getting full of filial affection and gratitude to one's native land that had given birth to his nation."

Without a doubt, native language takes a prominent place in formation of ethnic identity. Through his many public and printed addresses, Chingiz Aytmatov several times emphasized importance of native language in formation of personality. Speaking from his personal experience, Chingiz Aytmatov said: "Only native speech, acquainted and mastered during childhood may ... awake first origins of national pride in a person... childhood is the period when true mastering of one's native speech is shaped and the period when a feeling of belonging to a certain culture arises".

Developing his thoughts on the role of native speech, he proposes an idea interesting from the point of view of psychology of textual creation: "When I am creating my works in Kyrgyz, I again feel

uniqueness in my self-expression." While raising concerns over the fate of small ethnicities, the great humanitarian wrote: "Being the most essential element of national culture, language is at the same time a means of its development" (Aytmatov, 1988, p. 220).

Besides the topic of native language, Aytmatov's world view shows clear evidence of the problem of human identity, that of belonging to a family, kin, tribe, people. In psychology, the need to belong with one's people is among five basic human needs, akin to the need in love and friendship (five-level Maslow's hierarchy of needs). It takes the third place, after physiological needs and security. In its own turn, this need may be satisfied when there are conditions for formation of ethnic self-identity. This ethnic self-identity is however usually impossible without knowledge of language, culture and history of one's people. Importance of knowing he answers to "who am I?" and "where I come from?" kind of questions was recognized by many after reading Aytmatov's novel "The Day Lasts More Than A Hundred Years". The work *mankurt*, coined by Aytmatov, became a note of warning also to those who stopped feeling belonging to their people in our new global world.

In one of his articles, Aytmatov was proud and admiring of his people, who created the *Epic of Manas*: "Long existence of a nomadic people... together with high poetic talent led to arising and blooming of narrative epic genre... If someone asked me, what great persons I know from my people, I would name Sayakbay Karalaev first.:" Further, we may see the importance of ethnic belonging to the writer. "Being proud of history and creativity of one's people is intrinsic for everyone". As a person clearly understands their ethnic identity in the process of inter-ethnic communication in multicultural environment, Aytmatov expresses natural perception of one's ethnicity in the following phrases: "Connection to one's soil, people... feeds the culture with living, fruitful juices, helps it to come out to global human expanse, for there is a lot of common in life of various peoples and their world view."

Bashkir writer Amir Aminev rightfully notes the role and importance of Chingiz Aytmatov's works in the global literature: "The main feat accomplished by great Chingiz Aytmatov was using antiquity, world view, history and culture of a people and wisdom collected through centuries to address future in order to predefine issues that await our global civilization. Unfortunately, we are still unable to appraise in full both the creations of the writer and the depth of the issues he has been touching upon."

Literary character, protagonist, a human person is seen by Chingiz Aytmatov from the point of view of belonging to a certain group, be it social, ethnic or cultural.

Chingiz Aytmatov created a row of vivid female characters reflecting the mentality of eastern women. Each character has its own individuality, emotional content, while simultaneously being connected with the common philosophy, links, concepts and bearing a significant ideological and aesthetic load.

In the very beginning of novella *Jamila*, a character of Elder Mother is introduced. This image embodies the philosophy of wisdom and *primum mobile*. Elder Mother is a symbol of patience and commitment of eastern woman, who is devoted to traditional family values and protecting the family.

Through the text, Aytmatov provides characteristics of Elder Mother through the eyes of Seit, an adolescent boy.

"Agreement and prosperity of our house and big family fully depend on my mother. She is the absolute mistress of both courtyards, a guardian of the hearth. She was very young when she came into the family of our nomad grandfathers and after that she always venerated their memory, managing the

families following the laws of justice. In our ail, she was considered the most honorable, conscientious and experienced housewife. Mother was in charge of everything in the house. Truth be told, inhabitants of the ail did not hold father for the head of the family. On more than one occasion one could hear people saying something like: "Oh, don't go to *ustaka* – a respectful name for artisans in our part of the world—he know nothing but his axe. Elder Mother is the head there, go to her, it would be better".

The image of Elder Mother is that of the guardian of the hearth. In her village, like in her family, she was admired and respected as a wise and conscientious person. According to Elder Mother, one's goals should be being faithful to God and husband, having plenty to live upon and giving birth to children. Speaking to Jamila, she said: "Praise Allah, my daughter, for you came into a strong and blessed house. This is your happiness. Woman's happiness is in giving birth to children, so that there is a plenty to live upon in the house. Happiness lives only with those who keep their honor and conscience. Remember this, and keep your honor." The words of Elder Mother reflect solid eastern family values. She educates her young daughter-in-law Jamila in such traditions where a woman in eastern and Turkic family is held as a guardian of the hearth and is responsible for strong familial ties. Even when the head of the family is away from home, his wife stays behind as a house manager. This situation is typical of many Turkic peoples and here Chingiz Aytmatov gives Elder Mother a central position in the text.

The character of Younger Mother is painted by Aytmatov with specific warmth and love. "My Younger Mother, a kind, facile, humble woman, did not lag behind young people in work, be it digging irrigation ditches or watering, in other words, she held her grub hoe tight. Younger Mother in the work of Aytmatov reflects a type of eastern woman with a humble character. She became a widow and sent her sons off to war. However, she is never lamenting her fate and continues keeping her household uncomplaining.

When describing Jamila, a representative of a younger generation, the author clearly sets the typical characteristics of an eastern woman. For example: "Jamila was pretty. Slim, handsome, with coarse straight hair braided into two tight plaits, she was artful in tying her white head scarf in such a way that it went through her forehead a bit slantwise, fitting her smooth swarthy skin. When Jamila laughed, her bluish-black almond eyes were filling with young ardor, and when she started singing salty ail songs, her eyes showed girly shine".

Thus, Elder and Younger Mothers and Jamila from this novella are vivid national characters reflecting authorial concept of eastern woman as a guardian of the hearth.

3.3. While supporting development of ethnic culture and native language, the great humanitarian writer stayed internationalist: "It is very realistic to preserve existing languages of small peoples... both by internal linguistic self-development and by direct and indirect enrichment from cultures of more advanced languages of the world. Integration of national cultures does not lead to depersonalization and loss of uniqueness, but to their enrichment, development and growth, actualization of potential that presents in each and every people and is being brought from the best national traditions.

It should be noted that Chingiz Aytmatov exerted a great influence over Bashkir literary and cultural environment through theater (Alibaev et al., 2016).

Professor Baimov, a prominent specialist in Bashkir literature and winner of Salavat Yulayev Prize undertook a comparative typological analysis of works authored by Karim (1986) and those by Aytmatov (1988) showing similar motifs in their work, notes: "Specific nature and conventionality are

two mandatory components of arts. Peculiar use of symbolism in Aytmatov's Realist prose, especially in his novellas *Mother's Field* and *The White Ship* found admirers in his home country and abroad" (p. 117).

Analysis of parallelism in works of two great authors of the 20th century and personal friends, Chingiz Aytmatov and Mustai Karim (1986), shows some general similarities. Distinctive and original creativities of Aytmatov and Karim were always close, having common motifs and problems that were concerning two great humanists. (Gareeva & Mustafina, 2019). So, Elder Mother Olo Iney the Wise Woman (Kendek Iney) in Karim's *Long, Long Childhood* and Tolganay in Aytmatov's *Mother's Field* are both typical ethnic characters and close in the way they see their respective world systems. They both are supports, trees of life, supporters of children, young mothers, those in love, those aggrieved, dispossessed, unfortunate.

Characters of Younger Mothers in Aytmatov's *Jamila* and Karim's *Long, Long Childhood* both express the same general concept of a humble eastern woman. For example, protagonist's Younger Mother living surrounded by prosperity and love always respected the Elder Mother, like if she held herself guilty in front of her and feeling the latter's internal pain, the former always came in line with the latter as if in fear of injuring her soul. Just like the Younger Mother in Aytmatov's work, she is a submissive person of humble nature as it is proper among Turkic peoples, showing respect to elders and obliged to live in agreement with her husband's first wife.

#### **4. Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this article is

- to define ethnic world view and specifics of its reflection in Aytmatov's views and his literary and journalistic output;
- to identify features of the ethnic identity model created by Aytmatov studying the concept of its reflection in a literary work;
- to conduct comparative analysis of the ethnic identity model in works of Aytmatov and Karim in order to reveal common and distinctive traits in reflection of cultural and ethnic identity;
- to identify elements of poetics and aesthetics typical for a given author, which may be seen as reflecting means of the ethnic identity model in a literary work.

#### **5. Research Methods**

The methods of this research are represented by a set of scholarly ideas that allows conducting a conceptual synthesis of theoretical propositions and bringing to light the problem of formation of the ethnic identity model in the works of Aytmatov; among them are:

- comparative method, employed to identify common and distinctive features in reflection of cultural and ethnic identity in the works of two writers belonging to two different literary traditions;
- philosophical, ethnic psychological and ethnic sociological concepts of identity;
- philosophical and psychological concepts of humanism;
- the idea of multiculturalism, as well as a related discourse of cultural diversity.
- the idea of internationalism.

## 6. Findings

Research Results are as follows:

From studies of reflections of ethnic identity in views and prose of Chingiz Aytmatov, the authors obtained the following results:

- Through his many public speeches and printed addresses, Chingiz Aytmatov several times emphasized importance of native language in formation of personality.
- Besides the topic of native language, Aytmatov's world view shows clear evidence of the problem of human identity, that of belonging to a family, kin, tribe, people.

Literary character, protagonist, a human person is seen by Chingiz Aytmatov from the point of view of belonging to a certain group, be it social, ethnic or cultural.

While supporting development of ethnic culture and native language, the great humanitarian writer stayed internationalist.

## 7. Conclusion

Identity issues have become a global problem of today, puzzling not only individual people, but social groups, communities and states.

Researchers are especially interested in constructing such a model in the creative output of ethnic authors, where specifics of artistic perception largely determined by self-identification process (Khazretali et al., 2018).

Chingiz Aytmatov was a representative of a monoethnic identity, as he was born in a family where parents were of different ethnicities but of the same racial and linguistic group. That is, by place of birth, language, upbringing and culture, the writer undoubtedly identified with his people and his us-identity was sharply reflected in both his literary and journalistic output.

So, examples from his articles and addresses created in the last century reflect us-identity of the writer himself and his understanding of ethnic identity as whole.

Without a doubt, native language takes a prominent place in formation of ethnic identity (Mazhitayeva et al., 2016). Through his many public speeches and printed addresses, Chingiz Aytmatov several times emphasized importance of native language in formation of personality.

Aytmatov's us-identity is vivid in one of his addresses titled *Ode to the Republic*, where the writer demonstrates his filial love and gratitude to his native soil that gave rise to his people..

The writer's view of ethnic identity embodied in his literary creations became a note of warning also to those who stopped feeling belonging to their people in our new global world.

In his journalistic works, Aytmatov notes that a person clearly perceives their ethnic belonging in a multicultural space and in inter-ethnic communication, while at the same time the same multicultural environment helps them enrich their own culture and get to know those of others.

Advocating ethnic culture, his native language, admiring the nature of his motherland, the great humanist writer stayed internationalist.

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