THE CLASSIC PERIOD IS ABOUT THE COVERAGE OF UNIVERSAL ISSUES IN KOREAN LITERATURE

Abdumalik A. Saydazimova

ABSTRACT

Objective: This article delves into the classic period of Korean literature, focusing on the coverage of universal issues within the literary works of that era. The objective of the article is to analyze and identify the universal themes and issues addressed in Korean literature during the classic period, highlighting their relevance and impact on a global scale.

Method: The methods employed in this study involve a comprehensive review and analysis of classic Korean literary texts, as well as an examination of historical and cultural contexts. Through this approach, the study aims to uncover the prevalent universal themes such as love, conflict, human nature, and socio-political dynamics within the classic Korean literary corpus.

Result: The results of the article reveal that the classic period of Korean literature demonstrates a remarkable resonance with universal human experiences and emotions, transcending cultural and geographical boundaries. The literature of this era provides profound insights into the fundamental human condition, offering a unique perspective that is both distinctive to Korean culture and universally relatable.

Conclusion: Conclusion part includes, the findings underscore the significance of classic Korean literature in addressing universal issues and themes, contributing to the enrichment of world literature. The study advocates for the recognition and appreciation of Korean literary classics as valuable contributions to the global literary canon, fostering cross-cultural understanding and appreciation of universal human experiences.

Keywords: Korean Literature, legends, fairy tales, Alpomish, Tangun, evil, Go’roghli, Manas.

Received: 28/08/2023
Accepted: 27/11/2023
DOI: https://doi.org/10.55908/sdgs.v1i12.2377

THE CLASSIC PERIOD É SOBRE A COBERTURA DE QUESTÕES UNIVERSAIS NA LITERATURA COREANA

RESUMO

Objetivo: Este artigo se aprofunda no período clássico da literatura coreana, focando na cobertura de questões universais dentro das obras literárias da época. O objetivo do artigo é analisar e identificar os temas universais e as questões abordadas na literatura coreana durante o período clássico, destacando sua relevância e impacto em escala global.

a Doctor of Philological Sciences, Professor, Tashkent State University of Oriental Studies, Tashkent, Uzbekistan.
E-mail: s.science@internet.ru, Orcid: https://orcid.org/0009-0004-4410-8344

DOI: https://doi.org/10.55908/sdgs.v1i12.2377
Método: Os métodos empregados neste estudo envolvem uma revisão e análise abrangentes de textos literários coreanos clássicos, bem como um exame de contextos históricos e culturais. Através desta abordagem, o estudo visa descobrir os temas universais prevalentes, como amor, conflito, natureza humana e dinâmica sócio-política dentro do corpus literário coreano clássico.

Resultado: Os resultados do artigo revelam que o período clássico da literatura coreana demonstra uma notável ressonância com experiências e emoções humanas universais, transcendendo fronteiras culturais e geográficas. A literatura desta época fornece profundas percepções sobre a condição humana fundamental, oferecendo uma perspectiva única que é distinta para a cultura coreana e universalmente relacionável.

Conclusão: Parte de conclusão inclui, as descobertas ressaltam o significado da literatura coreana clássica em abordar questões e temas universais, contribuindo para o enriquecimento da literatura mundial. O estudo defende o reconhecimento e apreciação dos clássicos literários coreanos como contribuições valiosas para o cânone literário global, promovendo a compreensão intercultural e a apreciação das experiências humanas universais.

Palavras-chave: literatura coreana, lendas, contos de fadas, Alpomish, Tangun, mal, Go’roghli”, Manas.

1 INTRODUCTION

The study guide “Literatura Korei” (“Korean Literature”), created by the scholar of Korean literature, Ko En-chol, addressed this issue as follows:

“...Khonchi and Phatchhi” is similar to the story of the Western “Cinderella” in which a girl who endured humiliation from her stepmother ends up finding her happiness with a man of higher rank. This story has been told in many countries, there are more than 100 different interpretations: in Germany – “Charmed Girl”, in France – “Cinderella”, in China – “Upset”, etc. The fact that a story similar to “Gongchi and Phatchchi” can be found in different countries is an example of the universality of Korean literature” [1.12].

The image of man, who stands at the center of all life’s problems, was first shown in works of art and literature in connection with divine forces. In the legends, fairy tales and epics of all nations, nature came to the aid of heroes in difficult situations. In Uzbek literature, the heroes of such epics as “Alpomish”, “Go’roghli”, “Manas” have achieved extraordinary power. In Korean literature, Tangun's father, Hwanung, is given the power to control the three elements from nature to rule the universe:

“Khvanun passes his judgment to the spirits of Wind, Rain and Clouds, shows the ripening period of any thorny plant, marks the fate of people, cures diseases, assigns punishments, and teaches to distinguish between good and evil. Therefore, he directs the affairs of each of the three hundred and sixty days of the year, while showing people the right path in this world” [2].
2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

For centuries, Tangun, like other national heroes, has served as the founders of the state of the Korean people, their “exemplary” activities, the way of life of the individual society, a school of life, and a unique means of understanding its problems. Of course, Tangun has already become a literary hero in Korean literature.

“Literary characters closely help people to understand and feel the events around them, themselves and others. Of course, literary heroes do not directly help anyone. That is, they came to Eshmat or Toshmat: “Do this, don’t do that!” he does not lead by the hand. The “support” of literary heroes is seen in their thinking about the effects of good and the ugly consequences of evil, encouraging them to observe [3].”

So, the activity of literary heroes is characteristic for the literature of all nations. Due to the desire to be better than the previous day every day, the fight between good and evil in literary works, opposition, conflict becomes a common “theme” for the literature of all nations.

The name of each literary character is also important. For example, in the epic “Alpomish” in Uzbek literature, it is mentioned about the birth and naming of a child, which is important in the plot of the epic. The original name of the hero of the saga is Hakimbek, but when he was seven years old, he was given the name “Alpomish” because he shot a fourteen-point bow left by his grandfather Alpinbi:

“Then all the people came together and said: ... let this be Alpomish Alp.” He became one of the ninety alps.” In the same way, the name of the Korean literary hero Tangun (檀君) has its own characteristics. Tangun consists of two hieroglyphs. The first of the hieroglyphs, a tree growing in China, reaches a height of 20 meters. There is only one type. The second hieroglyph means manager, governor.

3 METHODOLOGY

This is what the legend says:

“Hwanun, together with his army of three thousand men, descended to the highest peak of Txebek (now Pektusan) - to the place where there is a sacred tree for offering sacrifices to the spirits. From then on, this place was called the Abode of Spirits, and Hwanun was called the King of Heaven” [4].

Apparently, it is not for nothing that the first hieroglyph in the name of Tangun is taken from the name of a tree of which there is only one species, and it is given in the
form of a sacred tree in legend. Tangu is also the sole ruler, meaning he is the founder of the Korean Peninsula. A single type of tree is useful as a name for a single literary character.

In the name of a literary hero, his fate and fate are understood, and the name corresponds to his character, worldview, and also points to his future activities.

Every era has its own problems. In works of art, these problems are reflected through literary characters. Fighters who fought for the homeland during the continuous wars and defended the homeland, the wrestlers come out. For example, brave and courageous boys like Achilles in the epic “Iliad” in world literature, Odysseus in ‘Odyssey”, Alpomish (Hakimbek) in “Alpomish”, Manas in “Manas” are familiar and role models not only for this nation, but also for readers of other nations and characters close to the heart.

In Korea, where the feudal system ruled for many centuries, oppression and injustice in life, the people’s hard fate, their aspirations to change the existing way of life, struggles served as the basis for creating a gallery of images for medieval Korean stories. In classical Korean prose, the abolition of tyranny, oppression, and a prosperous life were carried out by members of the upper class who rose to this “perfect” level. They were “examples” for everyone. Their life was perfect, and their misbehavior, mistakes, and shortcomings led to the fragmentation of human society. Therefore, such heroes were moral, full of positive qualities, belonging to the ruling class.

In this place, the following opinions of the famous literary critic A.F. Trotsevich are appropriate:

“One of the important aspects of the Korean literature of this period was the interest in the personal characteristics of a person, the assessment of moral values in him, and the call for a high level of appreciation. The reason for this was the strong dissatisfaction of various strata of society with the situation prevailing in the Korean feudal state”[5].

The need for literary heroes also changed according to the demand of the problem of the times. Now the actual “model” hero is no longer enough to embody the human world artistically. For this reason, medieval Korean stories created images of ordinary people who were humiliated and insulted in connection with their social lifestyle. But these heroes embodied the miserable world of ordinary people. Due to the fact that the complex processes in the human heart were neglected, although it takes a worthy place
among the masterpieces of world literature, it could not become an example for Western literature. But these heroes will impress the reader no less than Rustam in “Shahnoma”, Mumu in “Mumu”, Farhad in “Farhad and Shirin”, and Tatiana in “Eugene Onegin”.

There is a close connection between the medieval tale and folklore. The plot of the story is adapted from ancient legends, folk tales, or short stories from pkesol collections are included in the basis of the story. The achievement of such short stories is that they are popular and written in a language that everyone can understand. Therefore, before their literary processing, there were oral, written notes and other forms. That is why the author of many short stories is unknown.

If you pay attention, supernatural forces intervene in the fate of the heroes of the stories. They have wonderful dreams that predict important events and determine their actions. In most stories, such a dream becomes a plot point. The reader was often interested only in the plot, not the creator of the work. Usually, all plots are of the same type: either stories with a historical basis, or stories consisting of myths about the activities of wonderful heroes, enriched with various fantastic events and events, conflicts. Basically, the main character of the story is deprived of everything, goes through difficult trials and ultimately ends up with a change in his life for the better.

In the Korean story, there are always two opposite poles - the suffering of the hero and the happy ending. This feature of the plot is related to the perception of the Korean people that chaos will be replaced by harmony. The heroes of the stories are usually passive and do not try at all to defend their point of view and punish those who hurt them. This is consistent with Confucian moral standards that require being humane, fair, and respecting elders. They consider it their main task not to take revenge on those who have hurt them or to wipe them out, but to maintain their thoughtfulness and harmony, which, according to their imagination, does not destroy the harmony in human relationships [6].

It is not typical for medieval stories to describe the personal qualities of a person and draw portraits of characters. Figurative expressions common to medieval Korean literature are expressed through female beauty, the heroine's abilities, and positive qualities. The heroes of the story are always beautiful, kind and noble. Evil people embody all the negative qualities and aspects. Nolbu in “The Story of Hinbu” and stepmother in “The Story of Chan Hwa and Hong Nyeon” are among such characters. All of the listed have in common the Confucian schematism characteristic of Chinese literature. At the same time, in the Korean story, which is characterized by the novelty of
images and the immediacy of emotions, the Confucian schematism loses its power and gives the reader an opportunity to realize the special appeal of the medieval Korean literary language.

Many works have been created in this genre, in particular, "The Story of Hon Kil Don" by Ho Geun, "The Story of Chunhyang" by an unknown author, etc. He is reminiscent of Robin Hood, the hero of "The Tale of Khan Kil Don", who built a just utopian country, and also resembles the hero of the novel "The Riverbed" by the 14th century Chinese writer Shi Nai-an. "The Tale of Chunhyang" can be included among the masterpieces of medieval Korean prose. We see the Korean interpretation of Romeo and Juliet in this play. Aspects such as appeal to social issues, exposure of ignorance, violence, social injustice, praise of women’s loyalty, call for harmony, instructive use of folklore traditions are considered important for these works. Interesting historical works about the adventures of heroes of different ages and backgrounds have been created in the genre under consideration. Officials and ordinary people, monks and teachers, that is, various representatives of the social class of the society appear before the readers. In the center of the plot of all works of the period, the negative aspects of social relations in society and the idea that it is not accepted by the author are leading.

In the oral works of many peoples of the world, various versions of the fairy tale about two brothers are popular: the evil, mischievous, miserly brother and the poor, but well-behaved brother. "The Tale of Hinbu" is based on the motifs and plot of such a folk tale, and does not deviate from folklore traditions at all: the evil, mischievous, miserly brother and the poor, open-hearted, gentle, believing-able, does not try to protect him self unconditionally and obediently accepts the hardships of life. receiving brother. Just like in fairy tales, the older brother always humiliates his younger brother, and then kicks the poor younger brother out of his parents' house. Hinbu lives on the streets, starving and naked with his wife and children. But a miracle will happen and these humiliations will end. Here, as in traditional fairy tales, the younger brother receives a reward from the tole for his open-heartedness, gentleness, faith, and help to the lame swallow, which means that his poor life changes dramatically: he will suddenly become rich. Then Nolbu became jealous of his brother. He demands his brother’s dues and heals the swallow by deliberately breaking its leg. But in response, the swallow drops the “Seed of Revenge” on Nolbuga, and the pumpkins that grow from the seed eat all his wealth. As a result, Nolbu becomes isolated and destitute.
The artistic interpretation of the concepts of good and evil is clearly visible in the example of the activities of these heroes. The plot of this story is as follows: Nolbu uses his position as a brother to deprive his brother of his share of the inheritance and even tries to gain wealth in this way. Here, evil creates an eternal conflict between wealth and poverty, between oppressors and the oppressed. Violence is not only carried out by Nolbu, but officials and Buddhist monks also take an active part in it. At first glance, it seems that the conflict has reached its climax and that the victory of good over evil is imminent. However, according to Confucian standards, harmony should be found in the universe. The brother’s faithfulness, hard work, and unconditional obedience to his brother even in intolerable situations lead to such a harmony.

If, according to Western European cultural traditions, the heroes face the moral rules of society and the state system, in Korean stories, the heroes of the work interpret their suffering as a punishment for their past sins, as a condition for achieving happiness in life, where Buddhist teachings are prominent. Such a description is very important and a general point of view for the plot of the Korean story.

4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The theme of love and loyalty occupies a leading place in the plot prose of Korean literature of the XVII-XVIII centuries. An example of this is “The Tale of Chunhyang”, which is considered a masterpiece of 18th century Korean literature. “The Tale of Chunhyang” can rightfully be called a masterpiece of 18th century Korean literature. The plot of the story is taken from the folklore, which was widespread among the people long before the creation of its first artistic version. At the end of the 18th century, a story by an unknown author based on this plot appeared. As a result, several edited versions of this plot are published, which indicates how popular the work is in Korea. The story can be evaluated as a literary monument reflecting the historical period when the feudal society was in crisis in Korea. The story tells about the illicit love between a noble teenager, the son of a district boss, and the daughter of a singer and dancer kisen, who occupies the lowest class in society.

Despite the fact that this story is about forbidden love, it is completely in line with the traditional foundations of society. The main characters - a boy and a girl - are characters standing on opposite social levels.
The social barrier cannot stand in the way of the hero: they love each other despite the boy’s father’s disapproval, they secretly meet and finally get married in secret. However, the boy’s parents take him to the city, and the new ruler wants to take him as a handcuff. The reader means that the basis for a tragic knot has appeared here: an illegal love that is not recognized in society, that is, the boy is the son of the head of the uezd, and the girl is the daughter of a family from the lowest class of society.

“...the nobles and the commoners, the original nobles and the poor—have always been enemies” [7].

A monologue told in this despair and reminiscent of the love story of Romeo and Juliet is the tragic solution of the work. But the heroes of Korean stories are together at the end of their sufferings and build a happy family. When this story is compared to the works of Shakespeare, the free man and his hatred towards the unjust society are prominent. The writer figuratively reflects the individuality of the characters, emphasizes that they renounced everything that did not belong to their feelings.

For the hero of the Korean story, preserving the honor of generations is important and should not be neglected. That is why, like Shakespeare’s hero, he does not think of destroying the honor of his generation for the sake of love. This means the strength of the foundations of society. The hero of the play does not even think of rebelling against society. The story clearly shows the author’s opinion that the personal qualities of the heroine of the work are not in accordance with her social status in the society: the heroine of the work is a woman who believes in Confucianism according to her nature, and according to her social status, she is a kisen girl. In such a complex situation, the solution to the conflict is given very simply, that is, the girl overcomes all trials and achieves her dream.

However, the story raises the problem of love, more precisely, not platonic love, but love full of feelings and passions. The name of the hero of the work also means “spring feast”, that is, this love is based on the analogy with the awakening of mother nature in early spring. The main idea and idea that human behavior is closely connected with nature appears as the leitmotif of the entire work [8].

The writer creates a character Chunhyang with qualities completely incompatible with his low social status. The girl’s ambidextrous condition brings her unprecedented difficulties and suffering. But even severe trials cannot bend his will. Her loyalty to her
lover is rewarded: she is reunited with Yori and is given the status of life partner of an 
official who matches her nature.

At the same time, social motives, which are very relevant for that time, are given 
ample space in the story. Hierarchical division of feudal society is depicted very 
realistically and convincingly. The vile actions of state officials, yanbans who have 
occupied high positions in public services in the provinces, abusing their rights and 
responsibilities, and their official duties without limit, are critically reflected. Pen Han 
To, the new head of uezd, is portrayed as one of such oppressive people. Satire and 
sarcasm are widely used new artistic methods to portray him and characters like him, to 
reveal the flaws and negative aspects of officials.

Injustices in social relations are openly exposed in the story, faith in the 
celebration of intelligence and humanity is reflected. The author of the story introduces 
the official, the royal inspector who restores justice, Lee Mon Nyong into the fabric of 
the plot.

The story’s fable and sharp plot themes indicate how advanced the writer is in his 
thoughts and ideas. Such an approach is characteristic of the representatives of the Sirhak 
movement, which is considered the most advanced ideological current of its time with 
attention to essence. However, in spite of this, the people belonging to this stream, no 
matter how dissatisfied, the author remained a supporter of utopia, striving with all his 
might to achieve equality and justice in the feudal society in the artistic reflection of his 
ideal.

Typical events of that time are reflected in the story. The place of the heroes in 
the society, the oppression and violence of the local government, the dictatorship in the 
administration, insults and injustices show how perfect the artistic fabric of the work is, 
and how rich in details it is.

The fact that the main character shows himself as a loyal friend on the way to meet 
his beloved shows his high loyalty. These qualities will help him pass all tests and achieve 
the status of a legal life partner. In this way, the dramatic conflict in the love story finds 
its solution in accordance with the harmonious world of Korean culture.

In this sense, the most important scene in the life of the peasants - the meeting 
with the palace inspector Lee Mon Nyong - they showed solidarity and unanimity. The 
author faithfully portrayed the insulted, humiliated girl - the peasants who, with their 
strong anger, opposed the royal inspector, who went to protect Chunhyang and crawled
to beg for forgiveness from the people. The peasant song from the story expresses the high spiritual power of the people who are struggling to achieve a prosperous life and bright peaks [9].

In the story, the actions and actions of the heroes are truthfully reflected, each of them has its own characteristics. **Lee Mon Nyong**, who wants to reach Chun-hyang and is determined to marry her, is cowardly when it comes to his own future, because marrying the daughter of a lame woman would deprive him of higher positions. **Chunhyang**, on the other hand, remained loyal to his lover despite the pain and suffering he suffered because of his love. The situation here is not as fantastic as in the earlier written works. The images created by the author in this work are distinguished by other aspects, the characters appear in different forms in different situations, in real situations. The story realistically depicts the cruelty of the mayor who ordered the girl to be flogged, the helpless girl’s endless hatred for the mayor, and the power of her love and loyalty to Lee Mon Nyong. In the story, it is clearly shown that **Chunhyang**, who is physically thin, has a strong will and mental strength.

“In ancient times, they said: “A loyal citizen does not serve two kings, a virgin does not touch the ground twice”. “If a disaster falls on us and our country falls under the rule of rebels, you, the mayor, would bow before them” [10]

In the work, the hero's heart, changes in his mind, internal turmoil, his place in the social situation, his desire for justice, and his determination in the fight for his love are clearly felt.

The author’s appeal to the real life events, real relationships of people, the conflicts that can be resolved naturally in their interests, and the conflicts and disagreements that the heroes themselves can resolve without the help of various divine forces, is a distinguishing feature of the short story genre from other genres. According to the terminology of today’s literary studies, it is appropriate to evaluate the short story as a realistic work.

Another peculiarity of the story should be noted. Similar thoughts about a prosperous life are given at the beginning and end of this story. In this, the author goes beyond the boundaries of love and loyalty and gives it a social and moral tone.

The main character of **“The Story of Khan Kil Don”** is a character typical of the literature of many nations. The illegitimate son of a wealthy official, Khan Kil Don, a representative of the “low caste” deprived of many rights, becomes a robber, a “violator
of public rules”. But he does not enter this path to gain wealth, but to help the poor, the disenfranchised people who are discriminated against by the rich and officials. Heroes like Khan Kil Dong - an example of a “noble man”, a defender of the poor and downtrodden, a typical Korean Robin Hood - have existed in all nations and all times. If there were no such heroes, they were invented, because any nation dreams of achieving justice. In most people’s stories, the “noble robber” plays the role of a just judge who punishes lies and deceit, fights against the arbitrariness of the rich. Khan Kil Don in Korean land, Robin Hood from England, Fra Diavolo from Italy whose real name is Mikel Nettsi, Wilhelm Tell from Switzerland, Carl Moore from F. Schiller’s drama “Pirates”, Namoz botir (historical person) from the history of the Uzbek people and many other heroes are examples of these. They are similar and dissimilar in some respects, because the image of an honest man who grew up in different traditions, but became a robber to take revenge on the oppressors, lives in folklore since time immemorial, and they have also been transferred to written literature.

The need for such heroes exists in any nation. Sometimes this need is not felt at all, and from time to time it increases. “Defenders of the weak and vulnerable” do not exist in practice, they are created by the people, they become legends, and the next generations admire them. But often the images of “noble robbers” have their prototypes in life and therefore are inextricably linked with the background, historical conditions, and social reality that created them.

The hero’s life path, the end of the work is determined by the conflict that pushed him to enter the “noble” path of piracy. If we compare Khan Kil Don with Carl Moor in Schiller’s work, we can see that F. Schiller’s drama has a strong individualistic basis, the hero has a personal conflict with his family members and those around him. Unlike Carl Moor, Khan Kil Don does not feel any animosity towards his father or other members of his family. Here more social conflict is visible: Khan Kil Don is not satisfied with the existing order in the society, but he does not feel enmity towards his father or his brother born out of wedlock. Khan Kil Don disrupts the existing social order in order to create a harmonious society where just order prevails. While the European hero is saddened by the fact that he has to break the law in his struggle, there is no such pang of conscience in Khan Kil Don. This is a natural situation.
5 CONCLUSION

European society is characterized by the existence of one official scale of values based on Christianity. A completely different situation can be seen in the history of Korea. The reason for this is that, as we mentioned above, three leading religious-philosophical teachings - Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism - have lived here for centuries under equal conditions. These three different philosophical systems permeated the content of literary works from real life and served different fields of activity, that is, the same person may adhere to Confucianism in the community while performing his duties as a public official, and turn to Taoism or Buddhism when he is alone with himself has been.
REFERENCES


