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Happy Marriages Are Blessed in the Heavens, Unhappy Ones Cause Poverty: A View on Women in Usun-Debeskertu-Khan's Instructions

This study examines traditional ideas of women and marriage, based on the instructions attributed to one of the rulers of the epoch of the "Religious Kings"—Usun-Debeskertu-Khan, and his ministers. The focus is made on female virtues, the most important of which is adherence to duties in relation to the husband and children. The standards that noble women had to comply with were higher than those concerning other women, but still quite realistic, as attested to by historical records. Negative female traits were said to be caused by untamed emotions, which cause one to forget about commonly accepted norms of behavior. The analysis of the instructions relating to marriage suggests that they were especially influenced by Buddhism, which, using various forms of instruction, including didactic writings, endowed marriage with a new, spiritual content. There were three forms of marriage, tentatively described as "divine", "earthly", and "infernal". The causes of happy and unhappy marital unions were believed to be mainly related to women's properties mentioned in the instructions. Marital harmony was said to depend mostly on the woman.

Keywords: Kalmyks, Usun-Debeskertu-Khan, instructions, woman, happy marriages, unhappy marriages.

Introduction

One of the trends in modern social development is associated with a new image of women, the emergence of which has succeeded not only in depriving men of their monopoly on leadership, but also for women in gaining a certain economic independence. The question of whether such standards will become commonly accepted concepts remains open, since the social and cultural space of the modern world is unstable in many of its manifestations. In real life, the perception of women continues to be linked with traditional ideas, which developed in the distant past and, in spite of everything, continue to dominate the mass consciousness. In this sense, the former nomads—the Kalmyks—are no exception. I.A. Zhitetsky associated the origin of the traditional perception of women among

the nomads with the division of labor, when female craftsmanship, in his opinion, acquired a "narrow, family nature": "While the belief in the unity of blood was the basis of any organization, women were the core of the family organization. Yet with the increasing prevalence of male craftsmanship, the latter came to the fore and made men leaders not only in the tribal group, but also in the family" (1892: 69).

The fact that a traditional view on male leadership in family life continues to persist in modern society is confirmed by the data of a sociological survey conducted among the students of the Kalmyk State University in 2018 for identifying the perception of family among the younger generation. When asked who should be the head of the family, the majority (55.3 %) of the respondents answered "the husband", and only insignificant part

(1.3 %) answered “the wife”. According to the majority (55.3 %) of the respondents, the man should be the real initiator for creating the family, and only a small part (2.6 %) believed that the initiative should come from the woman (Goryaev, Okonov, 2018: 62–63).

One of the sources behind the idea that the man is the head of the family are the ancient texts that shaped such a traditional view on the basis of economic, mythological, and religious notions. There is a writing of the Old Kalmyk literature, where several sections address this topic. It is known under the name of the “History of Usun-Debeskertu-Khan” (“*Üsün debeskertü xāni tuuji orošiboī*”) (Kalmytskaya khrestomatiya..., 1927). Since its appearance in the second half of the 17th century, this text existed only in handwritten form. Its popularity and widespread acceptance are testified to by the existence of thirteen copies (both individual manuscripts and as a part of four literary collections) kept in scientific archives and private collections in Russia, Mongolia, and China (Bicheev, 2019a).

This text is a collection of instructions attributed to Usun-Debeskertu-Khan, a ruler who lived during the epoch of the ancient “religious kings”, and his ministers. This name means the Tibetan King Tri Ralpachan (815–836) or Tritsuk Detsen (Tibetan, *Khri gtsug lde brtsan Ral-pa-can*); historical literature has preserved some information on his reign. He is considered to be the third “king of dharma”, who made a significant contribution to the development of Buddhism in Tibet (Pagsam-Dzhonsan, 1991: 24–26). However, Ralpachan’s instructions took written form not during his lifetime, but most likely much later. In 836, Ralpachan was assassinated by two of his ministers. His brother Dharma ascended the throne and initiated the persecution of Buddhism, followed by the disintegration of Tibet into a number of principalities. The revival of Buddhism took place only in the 15th century with the beginning of the unification of the country and religious reforms of Je Tsongkhapa (1357–1419). Apparently, during that period, Buddhist monks compiled the text of the instructions.

The Oirat translation of the text was made in the mid 17th century. The colophon that is present in all known copies of this work mentions the Tibetan king Ralpachan (Kalmyk, *Üsün Debeskertü xān*) as the author of the instructions, Aryadeva Guusi (*Aryādevā Güüši*) as the translator from the Tibetan language, and Kendulen-Khurmusta-Khan (*Kündölöng Xurmusta xān*) as the initiator of the translation. Aryadeva Guusi was the well-known Oirat leader Gushi-Nomin-Khan, recognized in Tibet as “the king of dharma” and “holder of the Teaching” (Tibetan, *bstan ‘dzin*). In 1637, he defeated the Khalkha Tsoghtu-Tayiji, who was hostile to the Gelug school; in 1642, he captured the Jang king, subjugated Kam to his power, and became the Tibetan

king (Ibid.: 129). Kendulen-Khurmusta-Khan was the brother of Gushi-Khan known in the history of the Oirats as Köndölön-Ubashi. Gushi-Nomin-Khan died in 1654; consequently, the translation of the work was completed no later than this year. Thus, the instructions of the Tibetan king Ralpachan, who lived in the 9th century, were compiled by Tibetan monks in the 15th century and were translated into the Oirat language in the mid 17th century.

In the collection, instructions are presented in a poetic form in proverbs, sayings, triads, and quatrains. Structurally, they are built on the opposition of the virtuous and sinful, wise and foolish, good and bad. The instructions are addressed to different social strata, but they are all similar in one thing: each instructs a person in worldly wisdom and requires him to comply with generally accepted norms of behavior. For example, the triad with the thesis of “*loss of honoring*” condemns the behavior of the representatives of the upper class—monks, rulers, and women of noble origin. The introductory section of the instructions ends with the statement that the morning of a well-behaved person should begin with prayer, and daily activities should be performed according to the norms established in the society (Bicheev, 2019b). The collection contains sections with statements about positive and negative character traits of women from the upper, middle, and lower classes, as well as views regarding the relationship of spouses and reasons for happy or unhappy marriages.

Instructions on the positive traits of a woman

Instructions concerning positive and negative traits of character and behavior of women were put into the mouths of three out of 12 wise ministers-tushimels of Ralpachan. In the rest of the instructions, they are present only in the form of individual statements, which describe women in an indirect way. For example, one of the instructions is as follows:

Pierce the tongue of a lying person,
Cut off the nose of a quick-tempered woman,
Tie the mouth of a gluttonous woman,
Stay away from a depraved woman.

*yeru xudal keleqči kümüni kelēni xayal:
kiling yeketü xatun kümüni xamariyini kirya:
idēdū xolmoi emeyin amayini bō:
ičiüri ügei eme kümün-ēce xolo yabuxu (fol. 12r)*.*

*Hereafter, the translation is by the author of this article. Transliteration of the text is based on the manuscript “*Üsün debeskertü xāni nomloqson šaštir kemekü orošiba*” (Scientific archive of KSC RAS. F. 15, Inv. 3, Item 148).

Another instruction concerning whom should be shown respect in society and how, says that the wife who follows what her husband tells her to do is worthy of respect:

A precious mentor is honored with reverence and worship,
Parents and the elderly are honored with food and clothing,
An owner is honored as a state ruler,
Relatives are honored with drinks and treats.
A marriageable girl is endowed with possessions and is instructed.
A wife who follows her husband's instructions is honored.

*ocirtu baqši youyan mörgün takād biširen kündülkü:
ečige eke kigēd küqšin-narani idēn xubcasun-yēr kündülkü:
ulušiyin noyoni töröyün yosōr kündülkü:
uruq elkeni arki maxa-yēr kündülkü:
kümün-dü üdeji ökü kütikēn ed-yēr takād soun suryaqdaqxu:
eme kümün nököriyünön ügēr yabuxula kündüdiyü (fol. 8v).*

The first section of the instructions of the minister-tushimel Yedeng cecen focuses on the same topic, and edification is hidden under the form of praising a “noble woman” (*sayin boqdo xatuni*), who firmly adheres to her duty of revering her husband and honoring his parents.

Honoring her husband's parents like celestial dwellers,
A woman who treats her husband like her own heart,
With her caress and tenderness she is
Like the light of the sun illuminating a snowy peak.
The essence of such a noble woman
Is akin to a precious pearl.
A wife filled with such wisdom
Will be honored by all her relatives.

*xadam ečige eke youyān tenggeri metü kündülkü:
nökörön zürken metü sanād:
šoulun tangsuq beyen barid:
casutu oulada narani gerel tusuqsan metü:
gegēn sayixan uxātai tiyimi xatuni činār-inu
arḡa zali ügei subuud erdeni metü:
amurliqsan cecen gegēn tiyimi xatun bolxula
uruq eligen bügüdedü xayirtai kemēyü (fol. 16v).*

The instructions of the minister-tushimel Onisutu the Sage (*Onisutu cecen*) are fully devoted to positive and negative qualities of men and women of the upper and middle classes. According to his statements, a man of noble birth has sixteen positive qualities, which distinguish him as a socially responsible person on whom the well-being of the whole society depends. In short instructions for the middle class, the emphasis is placed on spiritual practice. The instructions for the lower class are formulated in extremely brief form:

Do not give your property to anyone,
Do not claim anyone else's property,
Do not commit armed robbery, theft, or profit-seeking,
Do not succumb to laziness and idleness.

*öböriyin idē kümün-dü ülü ögün
busudiyin ideyigi öbörön ülü iden:
bulāxu tataxu xulayayigi ülü ken:
budangyui arḡa zali ülü öüskekü (fol. 5r).*

The instructions for women are more specific: a woman of noble origin should have fifteen positive character traits, while an ordinary woman should have eight. As opposed to positive traits, eighteen qualities that defame a woman are indicated. Interestingly, many of the fifteen instructions include two or more logically linked precepts. For example, the first trait of a woman of noble origin (*erken sayin aḡas emesetü*) is wisdom in matters of social management and external attractiveness:

Wise in public administration,
She has an attractive appearance – that is first.

*ünün šaḡin törödü cecēn:
üzeküi önggüni sayin bolxulā nigen (fol. 5v).*

In this instruction, the notion of “wisdom” (*cecēn*) indicates a quality originally inherent in the nature of each person and manifested through upbringing corresponding to its development. Attractiveness (*üzeküi önggeni*) does not mean the traditional idea of female beauty, but the capacity to use one's natural looks. One of the sections of the instruction says that a woman's “face should be clean, without pimples and blackheads” (*čirini ariun bolod urbaxu odxu ügeilüge zurḡān*). Thus, according to the instructions of Onisutu the Sage, a woman should not only be intelligent, but also possess natural wisdom and, if not be beautiful, she should remain attractive.

At the same time, a woman is expected to be shy and bashful, not talkative, look well-groomed, manage household chores, and be a friendly hostess:

Not talkative, always well-groomed,
She will not allow for embarrassment and shame – that is second.

She performs all her assigned duties,
Welcomes all guests who come [to the house] – that is third.

*kelekü ügeni cön bolod: ürgüldui/de beyebēn xadāyalan
ayixu jiqšöüri içiüri medeküi-lurḡa xoyor.
üyile-bēn üyiledün čidād:
učiraqsan bügüdeyigi tejīn čidaxui-lurḡa yurbun (fol. 5v).*

The known historical chronicles, archival documents, and oral legends confirm that the wives of some Oirat and Kalmyk rulers really did possess such qualities. In this case, we are speaking about the period when the Oirat translation of the instructions was not yet available. For example, in 1637, the wife of the Dzungarian ruler Batur-Khuntaiji Yum-Agas-Khatun received the Russian ambassador on her own, when her husband was on a military campaign against the Mongols. After receiving the news that the Oirats were defeated, she independently made a decision to roam with her subjects “to the Irtysh

and Lake Yamyshev, wareful of the Mungal people” (Zlatkin, 1983: 128). In 1643, Yum-Agas-Khatun also received the Russian ambassador on her own, since Batur-Khuntaiji was on a campaign against the Kazakhs (Fisher, 1774: 442–443).

The biography of the Oirat Zaya-Pandita provides information that Saikhanchzhu-Khatun, the mother of the Khosheut Ablai-Taisha, who possessed a philosophical mind and poetic gift, contributed to reconciliation between warring brothers (Radnabhadra, 1999: 78). When Echzhi-Tsagan, the mother of the Derbet ruler Malai-Batur, was returning from her pilgrimage to Tibet, on the way she met Zaya-Pandita—the head of the monastic community of the Dzungar Khanate, famous Oirat enlightener and founder of the national written language—and gave him an honorable reception (Kalmytskiye istoriko-literaturniye pamyatniki..., 1969: 104).

From later testimonies, one can cite the notes of the Orthodox priest and missionary P. Smirnov about the reception of the headquarters’ officials by the wife of the owner of the Kharakhus-Ednievsky ulus of the Kalmyk steppe: “We entered. The princess, dressed in a luxurious ethnic outfit, was sitting on a wide ledge near a high bed covered with a Persian carpet. ... After the usual greetings and congratulations on her newborn son, the hostess asked us to be seated. In her yurt, her husband sat as a guest, giving no orders. The princess called her servants... and at her call two decently dressed Kalmyk women entered the yurt. The hostess ordered them to serve tea prepared in another yurt, which they immediately did” (1999: 75–76).

The logical continuation of the above instructions are the fourth and fifth instructions, which do not allow for empty pastimes, deceit, licentiousness, and require a woman to be well-balanced, have discretion and the ability to reflect and not say too much.

She does not lie, does not lead a dissolute life,
Does not wander around visiting people – that is fourth.
She is unhurried, has discretion,
Not loose-tongued, does not say more than she needs – that is fifth.

aljijās xudal kigēd
ayil uluši ülü kerün yabuxui-luyā dōrbōn:
udān uta uu sedkiltei bolod
amani batu bolxu-luyā tabun (fol. 6r).

All of these character traits imply strict self-discipline and constant efforts to develop the qualities that are initially implanted in the process of upbringing the girl in her parents’ home, which are mainly directly borrowed from her mother. It is no accident that when choosing a future bride, the Kalmyks were primarily interested in the character of her mother.

This is followed by instructions that directly relate to practical skills, such as raising children, maintaining the family, and managing the household.

She raises children correctly,
Skillfully maintains the family – that is seventh.
She manages the household,
Knows how to suppress anger in herself – that is eighth.
Not stingy, not annoyed,
She treats guests with food and drink – that is ninth.
She greets and shows reverence
Toward arriving and departing guests – that is tenth.
She goes to bed late, rises early,
Tidies herself up – that is eleventh.
She examines the household,
Takes care of maintaining it – that is twelfth.

küiken kigēd aru bülēn asurxu yosor tejiküi-luyā dolōn:
ed malan xurān xumin čidād:
our kilinggen darun čidaxui-luyā nayiman:
idēn undāgi zočid(tu) ögün čidad xor ügei-lügei yesün:
xuran xumin čidād: odxu ireküi zočidi
kündülen čidaxu-luyā arban:
oroī untan erte bosod
nöür züsēn arčün šürčiküi-lugē arban nigen:
xubacasu xunurān ömüsin xoni ükürēn büridken üzēd
tejin üyiledküi-lugē arban xoyor (fol. 4v).

Pointing to the narrow, family nature of women’s activities, I.A. Zhitetsky observed that “in addition to caring about food, warmth, and raising children, with minor exceptions, all craftsmanship work is concentrated” in the hands of women (1892: 70). Although the representatives of the noble class were not burdened with household chores like ordinary women, they also had to manage the household and domestic servants. Describing the everyday life of the Kalmyks from the Khosheutovsky ulus, P.I. Nebolsin wrote: “Women among the Kalmyks have their own special advantages, although their freedom and superiority over men have limitations” (1852: 117).

It is interesting that the instructions for women lack specific guidelines concerning Buddhist practices. According to the established tradition, a woman’s commitment to her duty, reverence for her husband, and devotion to her family define her as a true believer. The general instructions, which conclude the precepts for women of the upper class, confirm this traditional view of women.

To do good deeds for others
Without regret – that is thirteenth.
Committed to the deeds of her ancestors,
She honors her husband like a celestial dweller – that is fourteenth.
To be infallible in thoughts,
Pious in deeds – that is fifteenth.

xayiran ügei sedkil-yēr
xamaqtu uran aryatai geülkü-lugē arban yurban:
dēdüşiyin yabudaldu uran bolād öböriyin nöküri
tenggeri metü kundüleküi-luyā arban dōrbün
ariun sayin sedkil-yēr
arjā zali ügei-lugē arban tabun (fol. 5r).

In a metaphorical and artistic form, Onisutu the Sage gives instructions for the women of the middle class. These instructions are based on the principle of artistic parallelism natural for the oral speech of the Mongols, when specific qualities of a woman are described in comparison with images of animals. In these eight points, as in the previous case, instructions regarding external appearance and behavior are logically linked:

She is beautiful like a swan – that is first,
 She is silent like a lamb – that is second,
 She is tidy like a mouse – that is third,
 She flies lightly and comes down like a bird – that is fourth.
 She is devoted to her husband like a female camel (young camel) – that is fifth.
 She keeps her belly clean like a fish – that is sixth.
 She is sinless in her disposition like a baby bird – that is seventh.
 She is like a tigress in accomplishing her deeds – that is eight.

toyos metü üzüskülüngtei bolxulā nigen:
xonin metü üge cötöi bolxulā xoyor:
xulyu/na metü xuranguyi/tai bolxula yurbun:
tolimon metü nisxulon sou/xui-luyā dörbön:
temēn metü öböriyin nöküür-ese ülü ui/daxui-lüyā taban:
zayasan metü kebeli ariun bolxu-luyā zurγān
yoljimar metü sayin ayilyutai bolxu-luyā dolon:
bars metü öböron tusa-bēn
bütēn čidaxu luyā nayiman (fol. 6v).

None of the above recommendations for women expressed any idealized requirements. All of them were quite acceptable and were naturally embodied in the character of the Kalmyk women. In his essay describing a trip to the Kalmyk steppe in 1886, Professor K.F. Golstunsky wrote: “The predominant and almost exclusive role of women is primarily notable in the Kalmyk household; the lady of the house and her daughters, despite their age, are decisively in charge of the entire household. I have rarely observed that her husband would take any part in it. It is remarkable, however, that with this hard work imposed on a woman, in no way she can be called a slave to her husband: I have never noticed that a husband treats his wife rudely or pushes her around; a woman simply considers caring for the household to be her indispensable duty and resignedly fulfills it without requiring help from her husband” (2014: 83). It is no coincidence that researchers of Kalmyk everyday life noted that an ordinary Kalmyk woman is distinguished by “passionate love for her children, devotion to her family, and to her hearth and home, attachment to her husband and complete absence of criminality among women” (Prozritelev, 1912: 8).

Instructions on negative traits of a woman

Eighteen negative feminine qualities are also indicated in the instructions of the minister Onisutu. However, they

are not subdivided into instructions intended for the upper and middle classes. In the understanding of people of the past, there were no moral gradations in sinful deeds by definition; everyone (noble and common) was equal in terms of sin. In essence, these instructions reveal those affects that cannot be resisted in the consciousness of a hot-tempered, selfish, self-indulgent woman. Her nasty character is combined with a gloomy and unfriendly look, laziness, licentiousness, and inclination to idleness.

She has a nasty character, is talkative,
 Is subject to unfounded laughter – that is first.
 She wanders around visiting people in search of food and drinks – that is second.
 Heavy-laden by sleep, she does not watch over the servants – that is third.
 She has a gloomy look and nasty character – that is fourth.
 She does not know respect and does not achieve what she intends to do – that is fifth.
 Without knowing shame, she commits defiling actions – that is sixth.
 When there is enough of everything, she does not care about saving,
 When there is not enough, she quarrels with her husband,
 She throws herself on her son and daughter – that is seventh.

alini mouxai bolōd nidūn amā olo küdölgün
ineküi-dü amaraq bolxu-luyā nigen:
ayil keren idē xöl erikui-luyā xoyor:
noyirtu daruqdan bol šibeqčün-yēn orilon nalixui-luyā yurbun:
anisxa kümüsküi-bēn buulyan
atarıqsan zang-yēr yabuxui-luyā dörbön:
kündüleküi ülü čidan küsekü metüiyigi ülü medekü-luyā taban:
ičeküi ülü meden: yekengki üyile-inu burataq-luyā zurγān:
bii caqtu ülü xayırlān oun ideqči ügei caqtu nöküörtön ourlan
küböün okōn nalixui-luyā dolon (fol. 7r).

The reasons for asocial and immoral actions of such a woman are hidden in her emotions, which have not been curbed by commonly accepted norms and make her forget about her duty to her husband, children, and relatives. Desires driven by anger, passion, and ignorance foster selfishness and, most importantly, rejection of those around them who are guided by such norms.

She praises herself and denigrates others – that is ninth.
 She covets everything and has a heart of stone – that is tenth.
 She is fierce like a dog and a pig – that is eleventh.
 She is stingy and does not pay back debts to her daughter – that is twelfth.
 Not understanding her guilt, she sheds naive tears – that is thirteenth.
 She is frivolous like a female animal in heat – that is fourteenth.
 She easily accepts gossip and lies – that is fifteenth.
 After quarreling with everyone,
 She cannot get a husband – that is sixteenth.

*öbörön beyebēn maqtan busudi moudxan inēkui-lügē yesün:
 bügüdedü xuricaxu-du bayartai bolōd
 beki metü züreketü bolxu-luyā arban:
 noxoi yaxai metü ourtai bolxu-luyā arban nigen:
 iden-dü xolmoi bolōd küükünēsen abuxsun youmā
 öüri ülü kücēkü-luyā arban xoyor:
 gemēn ülü / meden genen uulixu-luyā arban yurban:
 ölöqčīn noxoi metü salkilan yabuxui-luyā arban dörbön
 xadxa xob kigēd zengken üge-dü bayartai bolxui-luyā arban
 tabun:
 xamuyā kerülded
 xanilxu nököř ülü olxu-luyā arban zuryan (fol. 7r).*

Thus, the instructions of the minister-tushimel Onisutu reflect very realistic requirements for a woman, which have emerged in society since ancient times. However, with the spread of Buddhism, traditional ideas acquired a new meaning, when the good deeds of the body, speech, and mind were not simply opposed to sinful ones, but began to be perceived as a means of saving oneself, one's loved ones, and all living beings. Ideas about the marriage union and well-being of family life were also linked to these requirements.

On happy and unhappy marriages

The impact of Buddhism is most clearly manifested in the notions related to family life. The marriage union began to be perceived not only as a natural calling of man and woman, but also as a kind of spiritual choice of joint entry on the path of doing good, leading to enlightenment. On this path, a happy and harmonious coexistence is more dependent on the woman. Her love supported by mercy and compassion, strengthens her willingness to self-sacrifice. This is the hidden meaning of the instructions by minister-tushimel Onisutu, where he points to four types of women who find happiness in marriage with their chosen one (*učiraqsan nököřön amaran jiryaxu yosotu dörbün xatun bui*).

The wife who perceives her husband as a celestial dweller
 Takes care of him like a mother,
 Honors him like an older sister and brother,
 Behaves like a servant and slave,
 The husband sees her like a celestial maiden,
 She will live in happy prosperity.

*nököřön tengeri metü sanaxu
 eke metü asaraxu sedkil-tei bolxula amaran jiryaxu:
 egeči döü metü kündülkülē sedkiltei bolxula amaran
 jiryaxu:
 bōl šibeqčīn metü zang-yēr yabuxula amaran jiryaxu:
 okin tenggeri metü sedkil-dü zokistoi bolxula amaran
 jiryaxu (fol. 8r).*

For better understanding of how the essence of these instructions has become a natural phenomenon

for a Kalmyk woman, we should cite one testimony dating back to the late 19th century: "The owner's wife usually prepares tea or other food... According to the steppe custom, she does not have the right to eat the food prepared by her until she treats all men sitting in the yurt, starting with her husband. It is considered to be the greatest courtesy on his part, if he leaves half a cup of tea or soup and, throwing a *togush* (twisted bread) or a piece of boiled lamb meat into it, serves his wife in front of all the visitors! She accepts this surprise from her husband with extraordinary delight as an expression of special love and affection!" (Smirnov, 1999: 69).

Until recently, the marriage culture of the Mongolian peoples had the tradition of matchmaking children before birth (*öndögön xuda* – 'prenatal matchmaking'), which was consolidated by the ritual of offering milk, eggs, and an oath of good wishes (Jamca, 2014). In oral and written literature, there are stories about a groom's search for his bride (*öndgn siit*), whose parents, owing to various circumstances, left their traditional place of roaming. The groom's right to the bride who was arranged to marry him by his parents from before birth was unshakable. Even the ruler could not dissolve such a marriage union (Bayaka, 1989).

A fact is known from Oirat history, when the violation of a marriage contract made an impact on the course of historical events. The daughter of the Dzungarian ruler Batur-Khuntaiji (according to oral tradition, her name was Sayin-Mende) was arranged to marry Eseljan, the son of the Khoit prince (Noyon) Eselbiyn-Sayin-Ka, when she was still a child. However, pursuing favorable military and political options for himself, Batur-Khuntaiji gave his daughter to Puntsuk (Monchak), the son of the Torgut ruler Shukur-Daichin, in spite of the agreement. Not daring to contradict her father, she went to the Torgut nomadic camps, and a year later returned to Dzungaria with a son in her arms (the future Kalmyk Ayuka Khan). Sayin-Mende handed her firstborn child to her mother and told her father that she had fulfilled his will by marrying Puntsuk, but would not violate the marriage contract, and was reunited with Eseljan (Batučoluun..., 2015). The great ruler of Dzungaria did not have the right to argue with his daughter. However, Batur-Khuntaiji took full advantage of the fact that not just his grandson, but the main contender for the seat of the ruler of the Volga Torguts was in his house. Apparently, this circumstance forced the Torgut ruler Shukur-Daichin to spend almost ten years in Dzungaria before he managed to return his grandson to his lands (Palmov, 1992: 41).

In contrast to women who are happy in their family life, the minister Onisutu lists four types of women who are doomed to unhappy life in marriage (*jiryal ülü üzekü dörbün xatun bui*). This is a logical consequence of those

eighteen negative character traits that were mentioned in his previous instructions:

There is no happiness if a woman is like a she-wolf,
Knowing no embarrassment, shame, and fear.
There is no happiness if a woman subjects
Their property acquired to theft, fire, and plunder.
There is no happiness if a woman is like
A terrifying, ferocious hawk.
There is no happiness if a woman is like the
Insatiable female devil rakshasa.

ayixu emēkū ügei içiri ülü medekü čino metü bolxula jiryal ügei:
xurān xumiqsan xulayayidu abatan
yaldu tülen noxoi-du idöülküle jiryal ügei:
bürin bügüdeyigi butorouluqçı xarçaya metü bolxula jiryal ügei:
mou üyiledü erkešin amani xatou rakxa
metü bolxula jiryal ügei (fol. 8r).

The instructions of Onisutu the Sage logically complete the precepts of the minister-tushimel Zarliq cecen. He distinguishes three types of marriage bonds, which can be conventionally designated as “heavenly”, “earthly”, and “infernal”. And while the first two unions presuppose family prosperity and happy procreation, the last type dooms a married couple to hellish torments already in their earthly life.

In the instructions of the minister-tushimel Zarliq, a man and woman in marriage that is blessed by the heavens are figuratively presented as buddha and dakini, who have met in the earthly generation. Being highly developed spiritual persons who have managed to overcome earthly attachments, they find each other in order to rise together to an even higher level of spiritual development:

The heavens bless a noble husband and wife,
Who have met like buddha and dakini,
At the same hour, having acquired a single essence,
In happiness, they will complete years and months of life together.

sayin ere emeyi tenggeri xamtudxayu:
burxan kigēd ragini metü ućirād saca
nigen činar-tai bolun odoyu:
jil saraıyigi jiryal-yēr dousuyu (fol. 13r).

The “earthly union” of an ordinary man and woman implies that in the course of their joint, happy existence they will relentlessly practice compassion in order to acquire *bodhicitta*—the necessary quality without which spiritual realization in the earthly generation is impossible:

An ordinary husband and wife are crowned by people,
After finding each other, practicing compassion relentlessly,
They will not notice how the years and months of life together will fly by.

dumdadu ere emeyi kümün xamtudaxayu:
ućirād saca eneriküi sedkil ülü tasurayu:
on sarayigi önggüreküini ülü medeyu (fol. 13r).

An “infernal union” condemns a husband and wife to terrible suffering in the earthly life. Their consciousness is scorched by the fire of anger, poisoned by the venom of ignorance, and suppressed by the thickness of ice of cold indifference:

An unhappy husband and wife are driven together by
poverty,
Like creatures with rabies,
With drooping eyes and a grimace on their face,
Years and months of their life together will pass in quarrels.

mou ere emeni külcin xamtudxayu:
āli ada ućiraqsan metü
nüdēn buulıan xabaran murčilzan
on jili kerülden dousuyu (fol. 13v).

The influence of Buddhism can be most clearly seen in the instructions on the three types of marriage. The traditional ideas about marriage as a natural union of man and woman serving for procreation, are supplemented with new spiritual content. The family is regarded as a means to achieve spiritual enlightenment.

Conclusions

In the cultures of many peoples, the husband and wife were traditionally expected to preserve mutual love and respect throughout their life together. It is believed that a happy and harmonious coexistence in the family union largely depends on the woman’s attitude regarding her duty to her husband and children. Similar views are also typical of the Kalmyks. One of the sources that shaped the traditional views on women and marriage union are the instructions of Usun-Debeskertu-Khan and his twelve ministers-tushimels. The collection of instructions of different kinds contains some precepts concerning positive and negative character traits of women, as well as reasons for happy or unhappy marriages. These instructions reflect realistic requirements in relation to women, which emerged in society from olden times. With the adoption of Buddhism by the Mongolian peoples, traditional ideas were supplemented with new meaning. Using different forms of preaching, including instructions in the form of verbal edification, Buddhism gave the marriage union new spiritual content.

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