

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.18454/RULB.2021.26.2.22>**ЭПИТАФИЯ КАК КЛАДБИЩЕНСКИЙ ЖАНР**

Научная статья

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**Аннотация**

Целью данной статье является рассмотрение эпитафии как одной из важных частей народной культуры, относящейся к кладбищенскому жанру. Нагробные надписи подчеркивают культурные предпочтения людей и языковые вкусы эпох. Эпитафия, как своего рода хвалебный мемориальный текст, своим плавным стилем, комплиментарными текстами имеют большую ценность как культурное наследие. Память об умерших "коммуникативна", т.к. свойственна всем людям. Следовательно, хранители данной памяти - надгробия как объекты культуры – также выполняют коммуникативную функцию. Память также "культурна", поскольку вырабатывает специфических носителей, обряды, институты. Главное - память об умерших способствует созданию общности. Обращаясь в воспоминании к усопшим, общество подтверждает свою идентичность.

**Ключевые слова:** эпитафия, духовные ценности, кладбищенский жанр, танатологический подход, раскрытие мировоззрения, культурно-историческое наследие.

**EPITAPH AS A CEMETERY GENRE**

Research article

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**Abstract**

The purpose of this article is to consider the epitaph as one of the important parts of folk culture in relation to the cemetery genre. These inscriptions emphasize cultural preferences of people and the linguistic tastes of the eras. The epitaph, as a kind of laudatory memorial text, is of great value as a cultural heritage with its flowing style and complimentary texts. The memory of the dead is "communicative" because it is common to all people. Consequently, the keepers of this memory - gravestones - also perform a communicative function. Memory is also "cultural", as it develops specific carriers, rituals, and institutions. The main thing is that the memory of the dead contributes to the creation of community. By addressing the dearly departed in memory, society confirms its identity.

**Keywords:** engravings, spiritual values, cemetery literature, thanatological approach, to reveal world outlook, epitaphs, cultural and historical heritage.

**Introduction**

The author supposes that the cemetery genre is very important because the tomb inscriptions represent the written language's evolution. They also show landmarks in historical and cultural development. "Cemeteries where they are concentrated are depositories of valuable historical documents" [1, P. 16].

The epitaph's analysis discovers even the stages of the people's thinking formation. Interest in epitaphs as a special part of cultural life has existed for a long time. They were first mentioned more than three thousand years ago in Ancient Egypt. Epitaphs became a literary genre after only two centuries [2, P. 21]. The epitaphs are usually used to commemorate the fact of burial. They bear information concerning the name and dates of a person's birth and death.

"Emotions, artistic features allowed epitaphs in the VII — VI centuries B.C. go from the memorial subject to the scroll and stand in a row with other genres of literature" [3, P. 17]. Some of the engravings have philosophical and religious ideas.

The study of epitaphs in Russia is associated with the name of Peter the Great. He ordered the Kazan governor, A. P. Saltykov, to make copies of some foreign engravings for the *Kunstkamera* [4, P. 67]. In 1771, academician I. I. Lepechin [5, P. 110] published the translation of gravestone texts into Russian. In 1846, a professor at Kazan University, I. N. Berezin [6, P. 58], studied the Bulgars' epigraphic monuments. A teacher of the Turkish-Tatar language of St. Petersburg University, Husain Faizkhanov, made significant contributions to this branch of science. He designated the dates of the monuments through the linguistic analysis of epitaphs [7, P. 20].

**Methods**

Death ends the process of human life. Birth is the beginning, and death is the end of it. Therefore, we can suppose that it has its own language. Beyond the obvious information inscribed on tombs, there are names, years of birth and death, and other important information. Epitaphs also offer brief flashes of people's lives. They no longer exist, but memories of them continue to live. This fact is evidently very important. The research is based on the most important methodological principles of objectivity and historicism. The specificity of the object, goals, and objectives led to the use of methods of macro-level linguistic research: comparative, typological, etc., supplemented by the examination of micro-objects, such as the placement of a necropolis, decoration of tombstones, etc., including identification by the author of lost inscriptions and attribution of monuments.

### The Purpose of Study

The actuality of this theme lies in the fact that the spiritual life of society is impossible without consideration of the engraved inscriptions. Thus, the article presents the great historical and cultural role of these documents that may be considered as the storage place for written linguistic phenomena. It is also of great interest that they reflect the worldview of the sender. In addition, attention is drawn to the latent educational potential of cemeteries. It is here that a person in a special way realizes himself as a part of society, feels his involvement in the course of history, and reconsiders his own deeds and actions. The memory of death raises thoughts of the future, encourages self-improvement, and helps us look at the blessings and misfortunes of the world around us as preparation for eternal life. In this regard, cemeteries have become instructive places.

### Findings and Results

The most important feature of epitaphs is their relation to living beings. These inscriptions glorify, recollect, and reaffirm the belonging of the deceased to a group, a family, a religion, or a moral system. Thus, among other things, they are real sources for invaluable historical, social, and cultural information. In semantic terms, attention is drawn to the selection of lexemes that implement the cemetery genre. Here, properties of the epitaph, such as solemnity, sublimity, severity, seriousness, penetration, expressiveness, and praise are clearly manifested. Here is the text on the tomb of the great physicist, Isaac Newton: *"Here rests Isaac Newton, who, with the unparalleled power of mind and the power of mathematics, was the first to explain the motion of planets, the paths of comets, the ebb and flow of the ocean."* There are only a few words on the tombstone of the great mathematician Leibniz: *"The genius of Leibniz"* [3, P. 11]. We cannot help but admire the solemn style and expressiveness of the epitaphs.

In syntactic terms, we can note compositional originality, brevity, narrative, and rhythm. *"Finally happy"* — this short phrase is placed on the grave of one of the creators of the doctrine of electricity — Ampere. On the monument to legendary Moscow physician Fyodor Gaaz, we read his famous motto: *"Hurry to do good!"* Analysis of these and similar epitaphs showed that the syntactic features are as follows: a) they usually consist of simple sentences; b) complex sentences are used no more than 25% of the time; c) the model of the narrative sentence is predominant (78%); d) interrogative sentences are widely used. Epitaphs "invite" readers to think of a vital issue: the transience of life and the need to do something useful before leaving.

### Research methods

Research of the engravings can be considered as a "non-traditional source of information about the way of life, culture, world outlook and religious beliefs of the nation" [8, P. 73]. We can find practically the same conclusions in the works of many scholars. Thus, the members of the Archeological Society, Historical and Ethnographic departments of Kazan University proved this fact by studying epitaphs. In the fruitful period (XIX – XX centuries), the works of Ilidor Iznoskov, Nikolai Katanov, and Gainutdin Akhmarov were remarkable [9]. Research done by N. F. Kalin and S. E. Malov [10] was also of great value and aroused great interest in the cultural heritage.

The tradition to leave memorable, kind words about the deceased spread throughout the world. This cemetery genre developed according to its own laws, traditions, and rules. It is based on the principle of not speaking badly about the dead.

The epitaph inscription is considered not only as an objective fact of human death but also as an event brought to life by the reader. The subjective modality (the attitude of the author) to the text and the objective modality (emotions of sadness, regret, and sympathy) are obligatory features of the genre. However, this is an optional sign of a statement (if expressed explicitly). The linguistic means of expressing subjective modality in epitaphs are the following: verb in the form of the imperative mood, such as *"remember"* and *"sleep well"*; verb in the personal form of the present tense, such as *"we swear"*, *"I ask"*, or *"we grieve"*; vocabulary characteristic of the solemn style, such as *"descendants"* or *"generation"*; and words-intensifiers, such as *"forever"*.

From the point of view of pragmalinguistics, we will discuss two sides of the gravestone inscription: its internal significance and external address communicative appeal. The gravestone inscription can be considered from the point of view of elocution, illocution, and perlocution. From the standpoint of elocution, the epitaph reflects the reference component of the information. In illocutionary terms, a number of problems are considered in the epitaph: positive (in rare cases, negative, ironic, and satirical) evaluation of the deceased and his deeds, such as gratitude, grief and sorrow, sincerity, and love.

One more important feature of the epitaph is its perlocutionary effect. It certainly has direct influence on the addressee. It is interesting to mention the implementation of this impact in speculation. This is the so-called "simultaneous application", i.e., imposition of signs of different semiotic nature [9, P. 170]. In other words, it is vividly shown in the context of giving an example of dignified life to the future generation. People remember the deceased by their good actions during their lives. In the focus of this research, an experiment on the actualization of the pragmatic potential of indirect speech acts with the illocution of "compulsion to sympathy" was conducted. Indirect speech acts with this illocution are analyzed from the point of view of pragmalinguistics [1, P. 21].

The study revealed the actualization of the pragmatic potential of indirect speech acts with the illocution of "compulsion to sympathy". According to this doctrine, the addresser tries to affect the recipient of the epitaph, causing the perlocutionary effect of sympathy / disfavour / neglect, which depends on the age, gender, and national characteristics of the recipients. These features (first of all, the attitude of the recipients to the concept of "death", which causes deeper and stronger feelings in older people and in women than in young people and men) determine the difference in the reactions of addressees to illocution's "compulsion to sympathy". Representatives of the CIS countries and the North Caucasus react differently to questions concerning leaving the world. For example, text recipients from the Chechen Republic, Dagestan, Ingushetia, and Ossetia do not always understand why sympathy is necessary because their religious beliefs suggest that life does not end with death. The difference is also manifested in the fact that the first group of addressees (50 people aged 18 to 25 years old) responds to the

epitaph texts in a more restrained way and shows sympathy almost half as much as the second group (50 text recipients from 60 years and older). Young people either remain indifferent, ignore the problem (38% of respondents), or do not show sympathy (42% of recipients). However, some young people show anxiety and even fear questions that are somehow related to death. Older people are more susceptible to issues of preserving the memory of themselves after their death. They do not remain indifferent, showing sympathy in 83% of cases. Women in both groups (25 of each) are more emotional in expressing sympathy. The percentage of sympathy expression is 58 and 76 in the first and second groups of recipients, respectively. Epitaphs encourage thinking about the most important thing. Today, the time has come to talk seriously “about the revival of spirituality” [11, P. 340]. Therefore, more attention should be given to the study of gravestone inscriptions.

### Discussion Questions

The tomb chronicles are rich and diverse. The thanatological aspect attracted the attention of many thinkers, writers, and poets. We can witness some philosophical contemplations on mortal life and the immortality of the soul:

— “*My dust overwhelms the earth, the spirit ascends to the sky*” (Seneca)

— “*My death and life — from God are they, and I do not live myself, but God lives in me*” (Johannes Shefler),

— “*Immortality is the truth, filled with light, and death constantly proves it*” (Rabindranath Tagore). [12, P. 301].

Scholars of the history of the genre note that “over time, the old forms freeze, multiply, and the recognizable clichés become the most widespread” [13, P. 152]. This genre was added by lyrical poems [14, P.161]. Elegies of famous writers emerge, and church texts containing the eternal truths appeared often. The texts also provide the “guideline for doing the right thing and achieving value, which means peace and tranquility» [15, P. 202].

### Conclusion

Such elements as explicit information speak for the deceased in a symbolic and metaphorical language. Experts of the funereal genre find in the brief passages on tombs syntactic, semantic, lexicological, and other important linguistic characteristics. They contain valuable, clear, and firm messages on belonging within a specific human community. The cemetery genre — the language of tomb inscriptions — provides more information about those who lie in the graves than we might see at first. Brief messages carved in stone tell stories of those who once lived.

### Конфликт интересов

Не указан.

### Conflict of Interest

None declared.

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