

# REFLECTIONS OF THE CHEREMIS RELIGIOUS BELIEFS IN THE TEXTS OF THE PAGAN PRAYERS

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The aim of this article is to show the hierarchy of the gods and spirits in the Cheremis mythology and to reveal the reflection of the religious beliefs in the texts of the pagan prayers.

The pre-Christian religion of the Maris is polytheistic and has a large pantheon of gods. At the same time it contains the elements of the Islamic beliefs and Russian orthodoxy. The Cheremis pantheon contains more than a hundred of gods and personified supernatural beings. The attempts to give their classifications are numerous (N. Zolotnitsky, G. Yakovlev, S. Kusnetsov, S. Nurminsky, V. Vasilyev, etc.).

Up to the 10th century the highest god of Maris was *Kugurak*.<sup>1</sup> Later this god gave place to *Kugu Yumo* and his cult. *Kugu Yumo*, being the supreme god, was surrounded by several lower gods. They constitute four groups.

The first group includes *Tünya Yumo* ('the God of the Universe'), *Osh Keche Yumo* ('the God of the Sun and Light'), *Kava Yumo* ('the God of the Skies'), *Mer Kugu Yumo* ('the God – People's Benefactor') and some others. These gods have their own staff of the advisers. The most respectable are *pürysho*, *piambar*, *shochyn ava*, *vitnezhe* and *sukso*.

The second group includes so-called 'concrete' gods controlling certain nature phenomena: *Küdryrchö Yumo* ('the God of Thunder'), *Volgenchö Yumo* ('the God of Lightning'), *Uzhara Yumo* ('the God of the Sunrise') and others. All these gods have goddesses with the name *ava*.

The third group contains the gods who are guiding the people in their household duties, family life and personal problems. At the head of this group there is *Mlande Kugu Yumo* ('The God of Earth'). The other gods are *Tul Kugu Yumo* ('The God of the Fire'), *Perke Kugu Yumo* ('The God of the Abundance'), *Kinde Shochyn Yumo* ('The God of the Rye harvest') etc.

The lowest gods comprise the fourth group. They are of 'local' importance and 'responsible' for the narrow circle of activities. They are *Tütyra Kugu Yumo* ('the God of the Mist'), *Saska Kugu Yumo* ('the God of the Fruit'), *Aga-pairem Kugu Yumo* ('the God of the *aga-pairem*') and others.

Besides the gods there are some lower spirits connected with the cult of ancestors. They are called *kugyzha* (without the word *Yumo*): *Surt kugyzha* ('the spirit of the House'), *Agun kugyzha* ('the spirit of the barn (for storing

crops)').

These are the friendly gods in the Mari religious mythology. Judging by their names and functions the surrounding nature is personified in all its aspects. Only some highest gods with complicated relations with their dependent creatures, their retinue, are the reflections of social structure of the community. The counterparts of the gods are the evil spirits of the destructive forces. The assembly of them include: *targyltysh*, *shaitan*, *azhyren*, *kiamat*, *vuver*, *ia* and some others.

In the process of evolution of Cheremis religious ideas side by side with the formation of the highest gods there was a process of shaping the antipode of *Kugu Yumo* – *Keremet*, the highest evil spirit. In the cult of *Keremet* different religious notions have been interlaced: the cult is of Mari but influenced by other traditions. Probably its basis was the cult of ancestors, later destructive powers transformed themselves into a united evil force – *Keremet*.

It seems to be right that *Kugu Yumo* cult reflects our ancestors' awe and fear of the nature forces, the cult of *Keremet* mirrors the ancestors' weakness before the social problems and evil, foreign pressure and alien influence. *Keremet's* retinue has also its own hierarchy of harmful spirits of different character.

The religious beliefs of the Maris are centred on the early polytheism, agrarian and partly preserved tribal cult. One can easily find out the elements of totemism, animism, fetishism, the features of tradition from polytheism to monotheism. Worship of gods and spirits consisted of sacrifices accompanied by prayers. So the most important documents showing us religious beliefs of Maris are the texts of the pagan prayers.

It is well-known that a prayer is a solemn ritual request of something for those who pray, for their relatives, people of the community. It is an appeal to gods for their divine protection from any evil. At the same time a prayer is a certain formula, a fixed, practically unchangeable text which contains these requests, appeals, petitions. As any text it is composed according to certain rules and regularities.<sup>2</sup>

It has a quite obvious communicative purpose. When worshippers appeal to the gods, praying is a reasonable act for them because in their opinion they communicate with the creatures alike themselves but much more powerful. When heathens apply to the souls of the deceased, it is nothing else than an attempt to continue the communication. So it is relevant to convince 'the interlocutor' in the frankness of the feelings and urgent necessity of the requests. The communicative goals of the prayers may be formulated like this: 1) to receive a certain amount of good; 2) to be protected from evil.

The worshippers were to be very eloquent and thus expressive in the for-

mulation of the requests 'to be fulfilled'. The prayers were to be expressive for one more reason. In an oral culture there is a problem to retain the sacred texts and to pass them on from one generation to another. It may be solved by the well proportioned structure and specially organised means of language that make the text easy to memorise.

Scholars think that expressiveness is produced by the mechanism of 'foregrounding' (the Prague school). Among different modes described by the linguists, in the analysed prayers it is achieved by a comparatively unusual selection of usual means of language and their relatively uncommon arrangement in the text.

Expressiveness is a kind of intensification of the utterance which largely depends on the position (in the utterance) of the means that show expressiveness with an attempt to influence the interlocutor's feelings, thoughts, thus achieving a certain reaction.<sup>3</sup> The markers of expressiveness – expressive markers – are these means of language and stylistic devices which strengthen the utterance.

Using the methods of linguistic interpretation based on the linguo-stylistic, componential and contextual analyses it was possible to deduce the following markers of expressiveness in the prayer: 1) phonologic, 2) syntactical, 3) lexical, 4) semantic.<sup>4</sup>

Among the first group the most vivid effect is created by the numerous cases of alliteration which is aimed at imparting a melodic effect to the utterance: šéžə šuméŋgə, šəm indəš kórnə...; kúðə–žəš déne kaŋašén, kaðer kúrtŋəm kučén...; šókšə kúšə kóčkəš...; tu žécən tólen túde čolá túrl'ə sařúm optén léktən...; kuyəžán kuyú kupíčšə..

Rhythm on the prayer is perceived by the regular repetition of similar syntactic patterns reiterated after short intervals following one another: osál mardež yəčən, βüð yəčən sáklə, kélyə korém yəčən, laβrá yəčən arálə...; lóktəzə yəčən, píre yəčən, maska yəčən...; korməžéš perkém pu, kəltasát perkém pu, kəltá tūškašát perkém pu...

Another type of euphonic repetition in the text of the prayer is incomplete rhyme (numerous cases), rhythm of which gives grounds to think these are the elements of blank verse: kúðə–žəš déne kaŋašén, kaðer kúrtŋəm kučén...; nur-mizét úlə, nur–kúðerét úlə, čuβár–šurmaksét úlə, lapká–žolán merañét úlə, aðák molát čolá túrl'ə kaikét úlə...

The text showed that the most observable rhythmical patterns are based on the use of syntactical devices as repetition, enumeration, antithesis, parallel constructions and on special ways of combining parts of the utterance such as polysyndeton and asyndeton.

The most obvious rhythmical unit is the structural similarity of the types of

the word-combinations, the types of the sentences resembling each other in structural scheme.

Only two types of the word-combinations prevail in the analysed text, namely the attributive and objective ones: *kélyə korém* – *a deep ravine*, *póre kuyú žúme* – *kind, great God*, *ši póltəš* – *a silver button*, *čuþár šurmákš* – *a motley lynx*, *uš-ákəlem* – *give us reason*, *tazáləkəm pu* – *give us health*, etc.

Asyndetic compound sentences are the most numerous in the text, their clauses composed on the same model create the structural similarity: *Osál mardež yéčən, þüð yéčən saklə kélyə korém yéčən, laþrá yéčən arálə, čelá túrl'ə osál yéčən, tušmán yéčən, osál šin žá yéčən, lóktəzə yéčən, píre yéčən, maská yéčən i čelá túrl'ə osál kaik yéčən saklo!* (*Protect our cattle from an evil wind, guard against deep ravine, against mud, save from any evil, from the enemies, from an evil eye, from the bears, from all other wild beasts!*)

Another rhythmical pattern is formed by the abundant simple sentences with participial constructions: *Šéžə šuménge, šəm indəš kórne déne čelá túrl'ə þol'ək-perké yéčən nemnám žəβətrəktə!* (*When autumn comes make us glad by the increase of different cattle (which) we will pen by 7–9 roads!*); *Kuyəžan pazərəškə mién šoyálménge, kuyəžan kuyú kupičšə déne þaš-kónðə!* (*When we come to the Tsar's market make us meet the Tsar's great merchants!*)

In a few compound polysyndetic sentences the role of the conjunction belongs to the participle-co-ordinator *at*, which unites intense requests into a whole: *kaþán yéčən ron žén nálmə yəðəmat perkém pu, aþun šikš koklašát perkém pu, sapónðə koklašát iðəmešat perkém pu, žul ošma yájə kuén čumərmə kinð-perkém pu, þakš-kü koklašát, klat-purašat perkém pu, šóktə-tayənašat perkém pu!* (*On taking the stacks to pieces give them profusion, give abundance to the barn smoke, give profusion between the flail and the threshing floor, like the sand from the River Volga, give abundance to the collected grain, and give profusion between the millstones in the barn and between the sieve and the flat trough!*)

The stylistic effect of the epiphoric repetition is logical importance, a necessity to fix attention on the keyword of the requests.

Another syntactical expressive marker in the prayer is enumeration. The enumerated words (mainly nouns) create a chain: *...čelá túrl'ə osál yéčən, tušmán yéčən, osál šin žá yéčən, lóktəzə yéčən, píre yéčən, maská yéčən i čelá túrl'ə osal kaik yéčən saklə.* (*Save us from any evil, from the enemies, from an evil eye, from the sorcerers, from the wolves, from the bears, from all other wild beasts*); *...kinð perkém pu, þakš-kü koklašát, klat-purašat perkém pu, šóktə-tayənašat perkém pu!* (*Give abundance to the grain and give profusion between the millstones in the barn, and between the sieve and the flat trough!*)

There are some cases of antithesis: *...iseržəm tüžəm éšte, kaŋgažəm kojām*

ošto! (*make barren cows with calves, make thin (cattle) fat!*); Ške tütörátəm ülķe póltə, mlándə tütörám küške küzəktə! (*Lower down your own mist, raise the mist from the Earth!*)

In one of the stylistic oppositions there is an idiom: Čelá türl'ə osáləm tūpen póktələn nálən kái, póřəžəm mėlən sařórən kónđə! (*All different evil turn away from us, everything good bring to us!*)

Repeated nouns create several sporadic semantic fields which reflect the household duties, the work in the field, the hunt etc.

Expressiveness on the lexical level is achieved by numerous cases of lexical repetition, by the usage of the duplicate words and intensifiers.

The most typical is lexical repetition. Component analysis helps to classify all the notional words of the prayer on the basis of the semantic structure.

The verbs (the finite forms) in the prayer are divided into three classes (verbs of activity, motion and existence) where the verbs of activity prevail. There are only three verbs of motion and two verbs of existence.

The concrete nouns of the prayer are divided into six classes. The first class includes the names of different objects, nature phenomena, geographic realities: *βütá – cattle-shed, šoktə – sieve, klat – barn; polyénčə – lightning, küđerčə – thunder, tütörá – mist, otə – coppice, kúřək – hill, kornə – road, etc.*

The second in number is the class of the names of wild animals and birds: *meraň – hare, βüd-komá – otter, βüd-kuzán – pole-cat, pířə – wolf, maská – bear, múzə – hazel-grouse, etc.*

The nouns included into the last four classes denote the social status of men, names of food, agricultural products and some others.

The adjectives denoting the quality of the objects and received by the organs of feeling prevail in the text. They show the quality of the objects received: 1) by sight: *kuyú – big, great, kumďá – wide, broad, kužú – long, šem – black, čuřár – motley, kelyə – deep etc.*; 2) by touch: *péňgəđə – hard, tough, šókšə – hot, léβə – warm*; 3) by taste: *támlə – tasty, šére – sweet, šókšə – hot.*

The adverbs of the prayer show the time (*aďák – again, žüďšə-kéčəžə – day and night*) and the place of the action (*ón žəkə – in front, šeňgékə – behind, tušécən – from there*).

This choice of the motional words is not accidental. It reflects the main communicative goal of the text – to get everything required. The worshippers are not only to give the descriptions of the desired things, good harvest, rich results of the hunt, but also they ought to give an account of the actions and their character, the places where these actions have been performed etc. That is why the vocabulary reflects the surrounding nature, usual household duties, characteristics of the desired things.

The semantic markers of the expressiveness of the text of the prayer are similes, epithets and periphrases. The examples of the similes are: *parčəžəm ši*

pólteš ýájø – *seeds like silver buttons*; žul ošmá ýájø (kuén čumermø kinðø) – *(bread) like the sand from the Volga*; øtø ýájø koišlanén – *showing off like a coppice*, etc.

In the text there are several epithets and logical attributes which directly characterise the things described: šelderyø šére šomák – *winged sweet words*, osál šin žá – *evil eye*, kélyø korém – *deep ravine*, léþe zür – *warm rain* etc. The examples of periphrasis are: lapká- žolán – lit. *having short legs*; hare; kaðør kúrtø – lit. *(a piece) of crooked iron*; a sickle.

In conclusion we may say that the expressive markers of the text are: alliteration, rhythmical models based on the usage of the syntactical expressive means, the identical types of the word-combinations, the same types of sentence throughout the text, enumeration with polysyndeton and asyndeton, lexico-semantic epiphoric repetition, the preference of certain groups of lexis (within the whole vocabulary) shown by the semantic classifications, sporadic semantic fields, antithesis, similes, epithets and periphrasis.

Phonologic markers of expressiveness (alliteration, rhyme, rhythm) create a consolidating effect to the parts of the utterance, intensifying the emotions, bring strict regularity into the composition of the utterance and heighten the general aesthetic effect.

Syntactical markers of expressiveness have different functions. They create semantic homogeneity of the text uniting sporadic semantic fields into the whole unity (enumeration); emphasise structural similarity of the different parts of the prayer (parallel constructions); have a rhythm-forming function (antithesis, polysyndeton, repetition); express sequence and copulation of the ideas in the text (polysyndeton, asyndeton). Besides they help to dis sever and compare some notions (antithesis); they fulfil the function of logical emphasis of the keywords in the passage and in addition to it – the background function when the words and word-combinations which precede the repeated units are made more conspicuous (repetition).

Lexical markers of expressiveness in addition to rhythmical function, logical and emotional intensification show semantic homogeneity within the parts of the text and relative independence and heterogeneity of these parts within the text. They show the real world with all its problems where the worshippers lived and at the same time they depict the poeticised reality surrounding the believers. The lexis shows the material and moral values of the community, different emotions of the worshippers.

Semantic expressive markers indicate the direct evaluating attitude of the collective author (the community) towards the described things, actions, quality of the objects (epithets), show a new apprehension of the compared objects, juxtaposing heterogeneous classes of them (similes), intensify the property of

the objects showing simultaneously different sides of them (periphrasis).

The functions of the expressive markers shown in the article constitute in their totality several pragmatic functions of the prayer. They include the conservation of ethic and aesthetic values of the nation, intermediary contacts between generations, evaluation of everyday life and behaviour as a frame of social orientation, a therapeutic effect (self soothing) that helps to overcome personal and cosmic loneliness. So the contemporary reader will find not only the 'direct' information elements of the early stages of religion, but also some indirect knowledge about the ancestors.

### Literature

<sup>1</sup>Yarygin, A. *Sovremennyye proyavleniya dokhristianskikh verovanii mariitsev*. Yoshkar-Ola, 1976, p. 75.

<sup>2</sup>Sebeok, Th., and Ingemann, Fr. *Publications in Anthropology. The Studies in Cheremis: The Supernatural*. No. 22. New York, 1956; Ivanov, I. O yazyke odnogo iz zhanrov mariiskogo folklora. In: *Voprosy mariiskogo yazyka*. Yoshkar-Ola, 1975, pp. 65-73.

<sup>3</sup>Galperin, I. *Stylistics*. Moscow 1977; Leech, G., Short, M. *Style in fiction. A linguistic introduction to English fictional prose*. London, New York, 1981.

<sup>4</sup>Porkka, V. *Tscheremissische Texte mit Übersetzung*. Helsingfors, 1895.

## **CIVIL ENGINEERING ASPECTS OF THE FORMATION OF MANSI AND UDMURT WORSHIP COMPLEXES**

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Traditional architecture takes a special place in the material culture of the Fenno-Ugric peoples. It includes two indissolubly connected and equally important elements: the architecture of buildings, that is the material part of traditional architecture, and civil engineering that places the buildings in relation to each other, which is the spiritual part of architecture. Depending on the function the building is initiated in – economic, habitable or worshipping – the part of utilitarian and spiritual saturation is changed till the full absence of the spiritual or material elements. Of special interest in this connection are the works of S. Bakhrushin, I. Gemuev, A. Sagalaev, Z. Sokolova, V. Kulemzin,