

IMAGES AND SYMBOLS IN MARI VERBAL CHARMS

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Abstract

This paper presents a description of images and symbols in Mari verbal charms based on the results of a multifold investigation. With the present interest in a spiritual culture of the Mari ethnos, with the development of innovative techniques in philological studies a complex analysis of linguistic features of folklore texts will help to show the role of verbal charms in the reconstruction of Mari ethnic identity.

Mari verbal charms are considered an integral part of the national spiritual culture, a principal constituent of its magic domain, reflecting ethnic feelings, emotions and pragmatic goals. The research is carried out with the help of a complex technique applied to 600 texts from different collections.

The process of investigation of leading components of ethnic mentality and identity includes several steps. The most important of these is the semantic analysis which includes componential and contextual types that help to discern four main groups both of images and symbols respectively significant for Mari mentality and ethnic culture definition.

Quantitative data evaluation reveals the most widespread groups of images and symbols significant for Mari mentality and ethnic culture definition as it singles out a dominant group by a dichotomous method, applying the principle of simple majority employed in mathematical statistics. The same technique divides the other images and symbols into complementary, auxiliary, and insignificant groups. In comparison with a symbol an image is characterized by a lesser degree of generalization.

Theoretical framework of the research includes concepts and ideas on the general theory of text, pragmalinguistics and linguistic stylistics. In this work a systemic-functional approach as a methodological basis is widely used.

Keywords: image, symbol, componential analysis, contextual analysis, system theory, dichotomous method, ethnic mentality and identity.

1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the paper is to show the groups of images and symbols in Mari verbal charms revealed with the help of a combined set of methods and techniques within a systematic approach applied to 600 texts from various sources (Glukhova, 2008-2018; Evseyev, 1994; Petrov, 1993; Paasonen, 1939; Porkka, 1895; Yuzo mutut utara, 1992; Yuzo oi, 1991). This is a part of the study of ethnic mentality which is usually viewed as collective ethnic consciousness. It is generally revealed through the following psychological functions: thinking and feeling; sensation and intuition; volition and will (Jung, 2003, p. 511-515). The predominant results of cognitive processes and emotional reactions are kept in different forms in a Mari ethnos' memory, folklore genres included. We regard *ethnic identity as authenticity of ethnic culture to itself*.

In this article the author shares P. Sorokin's viewpoint on culture which is interpreted as a certain system of components, including language, religion, morals, art, science and technology (Sorokin, 2006, p. 33-35). It has been known that ethnic culture identity is defined by its most conservative elements assembled and concentrated by the ethnic group on the territory of its living during centuries. They can be obtained from

folklore therefore we examine the *core psychological components of Mari ethnic identity* representing the outcomes of thinking and feeling reconstructed from authentic texts of Mari verbal charms.

The hypothesis is that the deepest part of the ethnos' past experience is arranged into three principal subsystems of images, symbols and values (further called by a united term 'factor'). There is an obstacle in ethnic identity reconstruction and it is the absence of a standard by which one can measure and interpret ethnicity (Cf.: Phinney, 1992, p. 156-176).

An approach allowing the solution to this problem was offered in one of the previous author's works. As a standard for the analysis, the work proposes to use a rank (a place in a scale) of images and symbols describing probability distributions of their mention in the genre analyzed. For a starting point the almost self-evident idea was put forward: that is to say, the more *important a factor is for a Mari ethnic group, the more often it will be used in verbal charms or the whole meaning of the text will contain a certain factor.*

2. METHODS AND MATERIAL. METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

The order of the research stages, based on the systems theory, includes the following steps: 1) the procedure of reading texts with the aim of discerning images and symbols, called 'factors', after employing componential and contextual types of text and lexeme analysis; 2) an accumulation of the factors inventory; 3) a grouping of the texts according to the factors; 4) an estimation of factor occurrence; 5) a calculation of the factor usage probability; 6) ranking of factors in a descending order of probability; 7) distinguishing main, complementary, auxiliary and insignificant factors by a dichotomous technique using the simple majority principle; 8) analysis of the results and summary (Glukhov, Glukhova, 2013, p. 399-412).

Mari verbal charms, on the one hand, convey different emotions and feelings of the ethnic group. On the other hand, they contain a figurative designation of the various notions which can be related to cultural concepts. Images appear as a result of the perception processes. It is interesting to note that the images in the texts of the verbal charms are created mainly within two groups of similes with the help of transferring the qualities of one object or phenomenon on another. The transmission of the properties is carried out on the basis of a feature similar to the compared elements. Philologists believe that every image is provisional and symbolic, as it can embody something general in a single. Researchers engaged in the study of images and symbols in Finno-Ugric folklore usually lean on the works of scholars who studied lore of the Slavic peoples. These include A. A. Potebnya, A. N. Veselovsky, B. M. and Y. M. Sokolov's monographs and papers. In Yu. Sokolov's works the psychological origins of folk symbols are explained (Veselovskiy, 1940, p.107-117), the significance of some symbolic images on the material of folk poetry is shown (Potebnya, 1989, p. 285-378) as well as the social aspect of imagery and symbols in folk lyrics (Sokolov 1941, p. 125-456).

In comparison with an image a symbol is characterized by a greater degree of generalization. The symbol is considered to be one of the fundamental concepts not only of art, but also of many sciences. By now many interpretations and definitions of the concept have been developed, which are offered by representatives of various schools and areas of philosophy, religious studies, poetics, semiotics, symbology and aesthetics. A review of studies on the nature and characteristics of the symbol showed that this object belongs to the concepts which are hard to define (Averintsev, 2001, p. 155; Losev, 1982; Losev, 1995, p. 274-288; Lotman, 1992, p. 191-199; Lotman 1997, p. 268-273; Lotman 2000; Potebnya, 1989, p. 285-378; Todorov, 1999). A symbol in Lotman's opinion acts as an intermediary between the text synchrony and the culture memory; is of an archaic nature; represents one of the most stable elements of the cultural continuum (Lotman, 2000, p. 242-249). At the same time, the core of the symbols of ethnic cultures is formed by an innermost group of simple permanent symbols that combine separate chronological layers of the culture memory about themselves (Lotman, 2000, p. 242-248]. From a linguistic viewpoint the symbol has a figurative meaning, since it is a trope, for understanding of which a certain context is needed. The meaning of a symbol is inseparable from its figurative structure. The content of verbal charms is aimed at achieving pragmatically oriented certain goals. However, there is also an emotional attitude of a person to the described events or their experience. Emotions in psychology are understood as processes that show the personal significance and evaluation of life situations in the form of experiences. An integral feature of emotions is their subjectivity. And if perception and thinking give the opportunity of the individual almost objectively assess the reality, the emotions convey subjective sensations and the relation of man to himself and to the society (Granovskaya, 1988, p. 189-190).

Answering the questions why emotions arose and why nature could not do without them, psychologists hypothesize that once emotions were a pre-form of thinking that performed the simplest and most vital functions (Vasilyev, et.al., 1980, p. 162). Psychologists also believe that human behavior is based on emotions, as they activate and organize the perception, thinking and aspirations of the person. Thus, they

have the most direct impact on perceptual and cognitive processes, "filter" the information that a person receives with the help of the senses, and actively interfere in the process of its subsequent processing (Izard, 1999, p. 40-41), creating images and symbols.

The definition of the system of symbols in verbal charms allows us to show the peculiarities of sensory perception and evaluation of the phenomena of reality, adding to the existing idea of the nature of ethno-defining features of culture [5]. The interdisciplinary approach to the complex study of the chosen folk genre allows us to identify the results, which can be used to make a fairly detailed and reliable representation of the ethnic identity of culture, mentality of an ethnic group under the study.

One of the main expressive means in the considered verbal charms is a symbolic expression of concentrated emotions and feelings, containing the subjective attitude of a person to the external environment and inner world. Componential and contextual types of analysis applied to simple and situational similes (Glukhova, 2017, p. 36-52) abundant in Mari verbal charms contribute to the identification of images as well as symbols in these texts.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Images in Mari Verbal Charms

The study of the collected texts showed that in the Mari verbal charm tradition there is a fairly stable combination of images that can be classified into several groups. The most widespread group embraces images of celestial bodies, natural phenomena. These are the names of: "the Moon", "the Sun", "fog, mist", "plant (name)", "wind", "tree", "forest", "land", "water resources", "stone", etc.: *tylze gai yandar liyash* 'to be as clear as the moon'; *keche gai volgydo liyash* 'to be as bright as the sun'; *er týtyra gai kýzash* 'to rise like the morning mist'; *umyla gai kushtylgo liyash* 'to be as light as hops' etc. Thus, in the closing phrases in various versions of the texts against witchcraft, the evil dissolution is compared with the image of dew evaporation and morning or evening fog dispersion: *Er lups gai shörlen kaiyzhe! Er týtyra gai shörlen kaiyzhe! Vodo týtyra gai shörlen kaiyzhe! Shonanpyl gai shörlen kaiyzhe!* (Glukhova, 2018-2018, p. 47). 'Let it disappear (letters.: separated, leave) like a morning dew! Let it dissipate like a morning fog! Let it go like an evening mist! Let it dissolve like a rainbow!' There is another example of a figurative representation of deliverance from the evil forces and enchantment: *Er lups kuze shulen kaya, osalzhe tuge shulen pytyzhe. Er pokshym kuze shulen kaya, osalzhe tuge shulen kaizhe. Shýshmö ýi kuze shulen kaya, osalzhe tuge pytyzhe. Výd shong kuze shulen kaya, osalzhe tuge shulen kaizhe* (Yuzo mutat utara, 1992, p. 23). 'As the morning dew melts, so let the evil forces dissolve. As the morning frost melts, let the evil forces dissolving go away. As the butter melts, let the evil forces dissolve. As the foam disappears from the water, let the evil forces dissolving disappear'. In the next text passage, aimed at alleviating the state of a man, there are all elements of nature: *Keche kuze kushtylgyn onchal kolta, tugak mogyrem kushtylem kaiyzhe! Kýdyrchö kuze kushtylgyn kýdyrta, tugak mogyrem kushtylem kaiyzhe!! Pyl kuze kyshtylgyn kaya, tugak mogyrem kushtylem kaiyzhe! Shýdyr kuze kushtylgyn kýza, tugak mogyrem kushtylem kaiyzhe! Tylze kuze kushtylgyn kýza, tugak mogyrem kushtylem kaiyzhe! Výd kuze kushtylgyn yoga, tugak mogyrem kushtylem kaiyzhe! Tale mardezh kuze kushtylgyn pual kolta, tugak mogyrem kushtylem kaiyzhe! Výd ýmbalne shymlé-shym týrlö kaiyk kuze kushtylgyn chongeshta, tugak mogyrem kushtylem kaiyzhe!* (Glukhova, 2008-2018, p. 56) 'How easily the sun appears in the sky, rises at the horizon, so let my body move easily! How easily the thunder roars, so let my body move easily! How easily a cloud rises, so let my body move easily! How easily the rising star appears, so let my body move easily! How easily the moon rises, so let my body move easily! How easily water flows, so let my body move easily! How easily a strong wind blows, so let my body move easily! How easily 77 different birds fly over the water, so let my body move easily!' In some examples, such natural phenomena as wind, leaf fall act as a basis for the opposition image to witchcraft. The disappearance of the morning fog, morning frost is a figurative parallel of getting rid of witchcraft: *Umyr pyl, shonanpyl, er týtyra kuze shula tuge myiyn osalem-nelem shulen kaiyzhe. Er pokshym kuze shula, tugak shulyzho* (Petrov, 1993, p. 47). 'As a light cloud, rainbow, morning mist vanish, melt, disappear, so let the evil weight and witchcraft heaviness spelled on me having melted disappear'

In the second group there are names of various *animals, birds, fish species*. Their names indicate totemic representations of the ethnic group worldview. The analyzed texts also mention linguistically expressed images of a *snake, bear, fox, elk, hare, squirrel, marten*, etc. In the proposed passage of the text, the image of 'cooling off' the feelings thus changing the interpersonal relations is expressed by lexemes 'wolf', 'bear', 'hedgehog', 'cat', 'dog': *Pire den maska par imn'ym kychken, kunam kugyzhan pazarysh kayen, kudalyshytyn kertyt, tunam izhe tudo vatyzh dene ikveresh ilen kertshe. Kutkyshyue dene tóshakym yshten, shongsho kovashte dene kypchykym yshten, kunam 42 pire dene 41 maska ik vynemyshte ilen, chyten kertyt, tunam*

izhe vatyzh dene ilen kertshe (Glukhova, 2008-2018, p. 17). 'Only then let him be able to live with his wife, when he can harness a bear with a wolf in a two-horse wagon, go to the tsar market on it. Only then let him be able to live with his wife, when he can make a feather bed from an anthill, a pillow from a hedgehog skin, and when 41 wolves can live together with 41 bears getting along in one den'. In the following text directed against witchcraft there are lexemes 'fox' and 'rabbit' which are used in the situation representing an extended image of improbability of the event. It is still guaranteed by the mention of a bear and a wolf of a white color (it is known that these albinos animals are quite rare): *Shörmychym nalyñ, osh maskam (osh pırym) chodyra gych kuchen konden, shogavuiym kychken, kunam möngeshla kural kertesh, tunam izhe osalym purten kertshe. Ryvyzh den merangym shörmychym chikten chodyra gych kuchen konden, shýren kychken, kunam möngeshla shýren kychken, kunam möngeshla shýralen kertesh, tunam izhe osalym purten kertshe* (Yuzo oi, 1991, p. 27). 'When he (the sorcerer) is able, taking the bridle, bringing a white bear (...a white wolf...) from the woods, harness it to the plow, to plow with it backwards, only then let him cast spell, bewitch me! When he (the sorcerer) is able, having put a bridle on a fox with a hare, having brought them out of the woods, to make them harrow backwards, only then let him cast spell and bewitch me!'

The third group includes images of reality objects. They also include words denoting food and drinks. Quite a typical conclusion of the texts aimed at recovery is presented in this way: *Shýshmyji kuze shula, tugak shulyzho! Pura shong kuze shula, tugak shulyzho! Výd shong kuze shula, tugak shulyzho!* (Petrov, 1993, p. 112) 'As the butter melts, let it also (the name of the disease) melt! As the foam from the beer disappears, let it also disappear! As the foam from the water disappears, let it also disappear!' Before going into the field people can ask for strength, quickness and skills, for example, for the harvest: *Er keche, tylze kuze kudalyn kýza, kuze 77 týrlö kaiyk chongeshta, týshka kalyk koklashte myinat kalykem tugak kaiyzhe, vashke týred pytyzhe* (Yuzo oi, 1991, p. 54). 'As the morning sun swiftly rises, as the moon swiftly appears, as 77 different birds fly, so let my people among the others easily and swiftly finish reaping, harvest the crops'

The final group includes images that are designated by: 1) lexemes - names of diseases, negative emotions or poor physical condition; 2) words denoting the heavenly gods (*Kugu Yumo, Kava Yumo, Mer Yumo, Volgenche Yumo* 'Great God', 'God of the Skies', 'God of the Universe', 'God of the Lightning'); gods and spirits of the middle world (*Mlande Kugu Yumo* 'Great God of the Earth', *Perke Kugu Yumo* 'Great God of Profusion', *Surt Kugu Yumo*, 'Great God of the Family Hearth', etc.); God's messengers (*sukso* 'angel, a guardian angel', *pýryshö* 'fate predestiner'); spirits, protectors of man (*serlagysh* 'household guardian spirit', *kapka-orol* 'gates guardian spirit against thieves' etc. (Kaliyev, 2003, p. 76; Toidybekoba, 2007, p. 201, 204, 207); 3) lexemes nominating demonic characters. (2) In rare texts there are defenders' names from an Orthodox religion but not from the ethnic pantheon of Gods and spirits. Most often, these texts are aimed at causing harm to health or well-being of a particular person, the deterioration of interpersonal relations.

3.2. Symbols in Mari Verbal Charms

At the very beginning of the study in the process of reading verbal charms which are based on simple and situational similes, psychological parallelism the first member of the two-member parallel construction a word with a symbolic meaning is revealed. This technique is often combined with the gradual narrowing image analysis which also helps to determine the symbol. The combination of methods and techniques applied to 600 texts made it possible to identify individual words related to the symbolic description of *space* (the most common concept in the studied verbal charms) and the addition of factor-statistical analysis identified *four groups of symbols* the dominant of which constitutes 55.7% of the total number of symbols used. Due to a limited size of the paper symbols of the following three groups are not viewed. The subsystem of the most important symbols in the considered texts includes the designation of four types of space which include: 1) water and water reservoirs; 2) dwelling, yard, outbuilding; 3) earth, field, place, side, country; 4) sky, upper atmosphere, celestial sphere. It is easy to see that the selected space types are broad concepts and they combine many additional meanings. For example, the dwelling and its parts can be represented by such words as house, farmstead, manor, etc. (Glukhova, 2014, p. 55-59)

The leading meaning of the symbol 'water' used in magic formulae is purification (from diseases, evil, witchcraft). As a specific conductor of the planned and desired actions that lead to a programmed result, water can heal wounds, bring relief, help to get rid of some illnesses and prevent actions that can be harmful. In the texts against witchcraft and diseases there is a final phrase in which the disease or inflicted evil should disappear like the sea water and river water foam. To make the text effective one should enumerate the names of all the rivers in the district. The next widespread idea expressed in this symbol is an obstacle to the sorcerer's performance. In the following passage immersion into water shows one of the conditions for performing sorcery: *Osh tengzysh unchylı-vuya pureñ, kunam ir minut ik sekund shke shinchgomdyshyzhö dene kormyshten oshmam luktyñ, shii výd dene puchymyshym sholten kertesh, tunam izhe memnam loktyl*

kertshe (Petrov, 1993, p.13) 'When in a minute and in a second he can dive head down into bright white sea, take the sand with his eyelashes, cook a porridge from it in silver water, only then let him be able to bewitch me'. In this example the water also interferences with the sorcerer's plans: *77 t̄yrl̄o v̄ȳd vashtaresh shogaltenyt, 77 t̄yrl̄o tengyz v̄ȳd vashtaresh, 77 t̄yrl̄o Yul v̄ȳd vashtaresh, 77 t̄yrl̄o Nemda v̄ȳd vashtaresh ik minutyshto koshten malten, posharen nelemden kunam kertyt, tunam izhe yuzo-yeretnik myiym koshten, malten, posharen kertshe!* (Glukhova, 2008-2018, p. 79) 'Only then let the heretic-sorcerer be able to make me lose weight, put to sleep, bewitch me when he in a minute can dry, stop and enchant the water of 77 different rivers, the water of 77 different seas, 77 different waters of the river Volga, 77 different waters of the river Nemda'. Water serves as a barrier to diseases that are sent to humans as described in verbal charms against fever. As a polysemantic symbol water can represent a danger to a human life if there are creatures that possess the magical power of sending disease. In the analyzed material the spirit of rheumatism lives in water. Here rabid animals that are sorcerer's helpers can reside too. If they are released from the sea and river bottoms they can undermine people's health (Yuzo oi, 1991, p. 15-22).

In other texts there is a combination of two symbols: *water* and *a house* including the buildings in the yard. *Water* symbolizes protection of the *household* from fire: *Lazh v̄ȳd muchko Zaichat gych Lazh muchashym kunam vashtaresh tul īylen k̄yzen kertesh, tunam izhe tide oraltysht tul pizhyn, īylen kertshe. Lazh v̄ȳd gych t̄yngalyn, Yalnerke ertymeshke Yalner v̄ȳd vashtaresh kunam tul īylen k̄yzen kertesh, tunam izhe tide oraltym tul īylalten kertshe. Lazh v̄ȳd gych t̄yngalyn, Staryi Pirogon deke shumesh Serdyzh v̄ȳd vashtaresh kunam tul īylen k̄yzen kertesh, tunam izhe tide oraltym tul īylalten kertshe* (Petrov, 1993, p.57) 'When the fire can spread against the tide along the river Lazh till the village Zaichat, only then let this house catch fire and burn. When the fire can spread against the tide along the river Yalnerka till the village Yalner, only then let this house catch fire and burn. When the fire can spread against the tide along the river Serdyzh till the village Staryi Pirogon, only then let this house catch fire and burn'.

The next most common symbol is "dwelling". Similar to culture of many nations dwelling of the Mari family possesses the same qualities as a family sacred tree. The concept includes the whole homestead with a yard, outbuildings, different sheds. Taking into account polysemousness of the symbol the context of verbal charms revealed a number of its meanings which allowed to form independent lexical and semantic groups within the subsystem. They embrace such words as *surt* 'a house with outbuildings', *v̄ȳta* 'a cow-shed', *klat* 'a barn', *surt-peche* 'a fenced house with all outbuildings'. So, in the text against fever among the members of a family (*P̄örtysht̄o kylmymuzho chertzhe shogash ogyllan*) symbol "dwelling" embraces the meanings of 'p̄ört' and 'surt-peche': So, in the text against fever among the members of a family (*P̄örtysht̄o kylmymuzho chertzhe shogash ogyllan*) symbol "dwelling" embraces the meanings of 'p̄ört' and 'surt-peche': *Kunam targyltysh vui kongyrashyzhe (kidkopashyzhe, iolkopashyzhe) minut-sekund koklashte pura shavashym (korkam) yshten kertesh, tunam izhe myi denem da surt-pechyshtem kylmymuzho chertzhe minut-sekund koklashte shogen kertshe* (Petrov, 1993, p. 49) 'When a targyldysh (a forest man) is able to make a beer tub (bowl) out of his skull (hand, foot) in a minute, in a second, only then let fever come to me and my house in a minute, in a second'.

Other analyzed texts showed the connection between two symbols – 'dwellings' and 'earth' – thereby demonstrating a union of the so-called 'middle world' with the cosmos which exists with the help of numerous high deities and spirits to which the person using verbal charms appeals (*Kugu Yumo* 'the Great God', *Kava Yumo* 'the God of Skies', *Mer Yumo* 'the God of the Universe', *Volgenche Yumo* 'the God of the Lightning' etc.) (Petrov, 1993, p. 76; Toidybekova, 2007, p. 204-207). However without the Gods' help the house being a closed space type is recognized as the most secure, safe, and reliable place that can protect everyone who lives in it: *Osh (shem, yoshkar) tengyz pokshelne ik sekundyshto sh̄ȳish̄o omartam unchyl̄i shogalten, kunam aidemym yshten kertesh gyn, tunam izhe osal yuzo-yeretnik surtyshkyzho osalym purten kertshe, tylech onchych ocalym purten ynzhe kert! Ulo t̄ynya ȳmbalne mlandym chumyral kormyzhtalyn ik sekundyshto kertesh gyn tunam izhe surtyshkyzho osalym purten kertshe!* (Yuso mutat utara, 1992, p. 4-7) 'Only then let the sorcerer-heretic be able to inflict evil onto the house when in a second after having turned a rotten stamp he can create a man in the middle of the white (black, red) sea! Only then let the sorcerer-heretic be able to inflict evil onto the house when in a second he can gather all the countries of the world on the palm of his hand!' It can be seen that having the main meaning of "the place where someone officially lives; a family, or a clan" the semantics and symbolism of the concept in the texts is protection from neighbors' and sorcerers 'evil eye' and 'evil tongue'.

The next widespread spatial symbol is *the land (mlande)*: *77 t̄yrl̄o mlande ȳmbalne er lups kuze shula, tugak shulyzho! 77 t̄yrl̄o mlande ȳmbalne er t̄ȳtyra kuze shula, tugak shulyzho! 77 t̄yrl̄o mlande ȳmbalne er pokshym kuze shula, tugak shulyzho!* (Yuzo oi, 1991, p.33) 'As the morning dew melts and disappears on 77 different lands, so let the witchcraft disappear! As the morning mist disappears on 77 different lands, so let

the witchcraft disappear! As the morning hoarfrost melts and disappears on 77 different lands, so let the witchcraft disappear!' The space symbol "the land" in the texts analyzed has one more meaning, namely: 'a far country'. The sorcerer's series of imaginary, unreal, improbable actions is placed into some unknown space and the enumeration of them ensures the impossibility of their implementation. According to historians and ethnographers *the land* in Mari culture is considered the main means of agricultural production and its characteristics are associated with the world of plants (Kaliyev, 2003, p.130-134; Petrukhin, 2005, p. 261-264). Thus one more meaning of this symbol is 'life'. In the texts against witchcraft, for example, in *Kurymym nalme-shörymö* ("Against death") the lexeme 'land' *mlande* is used with the word 'sea' *tengyz*. In these verbal charms there are actions with these geographical objects in unreal conditions: *Kunam yuzo eng mlande kurymym nalyñ kertesh, tunam izhe tide engyn kurymym nalyñ kertshe. Kunam yuzo eng tengyz kurymym nalyñ kertesh, tunam izhe tide engyn kurymym nalyñ kertshe* (Yuzo mutat utara, 1992, p. 38). 'Only then let the sorcerer be able to deprive a person of life when he is able to take a life from the land. Only then let the sorcerer be able to deprive a person of life when he is able to take a life from the sea'.

The symbol denoting 'sky', 'skies' occupies the fourth place within the dominant group thus 'closing' the list of words denoting leading symbols identified in the analyzed material. In the verbal charms there is a trace of the belief in the help of the Gods living in the sky. 'The sky' (*kava*) symbolizes a healer assistant in the fight against people with an evil eye and an evil tongue. In the following example from *Poshartysh shörymö* ('Elimination of witchcraft') the sky is the main obstacle to the implementation of several additional unreal actions: *Ik chas-minut koklashte vulno shopsharym shogalten, mlände gych kynelyn, kavashke shumeshke, kavam pochyn puren... tunam izhe pytaren kertshe!* (Yuzo mutat utara, 1992, p. 18) 'Only then let him take my life, when in an hour, a minute, he will be able to install the pewter ladder, rise from the earth and ascend to heavens.' The following excerpt from the text *Pÿi korshtymo dech* ('For toothache') contains a symbolic situation with the lexeme 'sky': *Tunam izhe pÿizhym lokten-puzhen kertshe, kunam loktyzo eng koremyse oshmam luktyñ uesh veryshkyzhe pyshten kertesh gyn, kavashke kÿzen, tylzym (kechym, shÿdyrym) niyalten kertesh!Tylech onchych ynzhe kert!* (Yuzo oi, 1991, p. 50-51) 'Only then let the sorcerer spoil this man's teeth when he can return the sand to the same place after having removed it from the ravine, touch the moon (the sun, stars) having risen to the sky. Until then let him not spoil this man's teeth!'

It is believed that help is provided 1) by addressing the sky and heavenly bodies (the sun, the moon, the stars); 2) at the request of the mutual cooperation between the sky and the earth; 3) intercession and patronage of the healer.

4. CONCLUSION

The results of the study of 600 texts showed that in the six classes of verbal charms and spells traditionally singled out in Mari folklore, four large groups of images predominate. They were detected and ascertained by the componential analysis and interpretation of the linguistic context of the charm, supplemented by quantitative calculations. The main group combines images of natural phenomena, which are based on two groups of figurative comparisons: simple and situational similes. They are expressed by lexemes, which reflect the mythological thinking of the Mari ethnic group. Next in frequency of use there is a group of images which contains the names of various animals, birds and fish species. In the analyzed texts images of this group are either opposed to each other in the comparative antithesis ('like a cat with a dog'). Or, on the contrary, indicate a harmonious co-existence, due to the instinct that the lexemes denoting these images demonstrate the totemic beliefs of the Maris. The third group, quite common in the studied material, combines images of various objects and reality phenomena. The most frequent are the words denoting food. The disappearance of water foam, beer foam, melting of honey and butter is associated with the disappearance of disease, witchcraft, trouble. This image is present in the final part of the texts aimed at preventing evil or getting rid of witchcraft. The last, fourth, group of images includes the names of the representatives of another world, mythological characters, ethnic gods, deities of the lower level, as well as evil spirits of demonology. Images of nature phenomena reflecting mythological ideas are associated with the pagan cult of nature.

A symbol differs from an image by a greater degree of generalization and typicality. Their meanings are understood in texts. The results of the psychological space perception in charms have shown that symbols of space are based not only on the lexemes denoting *landscape* surrounding the Mari villages, terrain and geographical objects of different origin (created by nature, natural, and created by man, anthropogenic) but enhance some abstract spatial phenomena: water, land, dwellings, skies. Systemic analysis shows they have a generalized symbolic meaning revealing specific features of mythological thinking of the ethnic group. These symbols complement the list of spatial archetypes of Mari culture. Unlike the song genre in the Mari verbal charms there are other groups of symbols that significantly supplement and extend the previously

obtained Mari ethnic symbol system. The resulting subsystems of symbols in the identified combination are kept in ethnic collective subconscious fixed in folklore genres constituting an important aspect of ethnic mentality and identity. A comprehensive analysis of the texts showed that the Mari verbal charms present not only a kind of artistic and figurative synthesis of observations on all aspects of human life, but also contain mythological and religious worldview of the ethnic group that determine ethnic mentality and identity.

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