POETICS OF MARI INCANTATIONS

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This article sets forth the stylistic characteristics of Mari incantations (*'шӱведыме мут'*), which constitute an integral part of Mari spiritual culture. The texts of charms represent a rare phenomenon due to the long history of their existence and their peculiar language features. At the same time, the tradition of magical texts can still be observed today. A sample of approximately 500 incantations from different sources allowed them to be divided into six groups. They differ in compositional structure, temporal characteristics, and expressive and stylistic devices. The latter is the object of study here. The research shows that among various expressive means and stylistic devices, the incantations are rich in syntactic stylistic means and folklore tropes. This choice of means can be explained by the 'laws' of oral presentation of magical texts and their pragmatic aims.

Keywords: expressive means, folklore tropes, incantations, informational content, pragmatic aim, stylistic devices, syntactic stylistic means

INTRODUCTION

Texts of the Mari incantations *'шӱведыме мут'* have interested scholars due to their compositional and informational characteristics (Sebeok 1974; Sebeok and Ingemann 1956). The aim of this paper is to define their stylistic potential, and to reveal their expressive means and stylistic devices, those qualities which make incantations a unique phenomenon in spiritual Mari culture (cf. Glukhova 1995: 115–122).

Interest in esoteric components of many cultures has not ceased since the 1980's. There are many original works analysing peculiar aspects of charms in different cultures (Kõiva 1990; Roper 2003: 7–50; Kropej 2003: 62–78). The notion of 'text' – and here we refer to incantations as texts – has been the centre of attention of many schools of thought since the 1980s. Nevertheless, the approaches to the analysis of text and attempts to define it differ greatly. A short message or a piece of information encoded in a linguistic form can be called a text whether it consists of several phrases, a whole book or a novel, as determined by representatives of different schools of text linguistics, pragmalinguistics or linguo-stylistics.

Despite the controversial treatment of this notion by different scholars, a good consensus exists amongst them as to a text's communicative functions and pragmatic goals (Fowler 1967: 1–29; Leech 1983; Leech 1987: 76–88; Niro 1974: 85–93; Dijk 1982; Dressler 1972; Leech 1983; Leech and Short 1981; Phillips 1985; Prucha 1983).

A text possesses certain features which permit it to be treated as a whole unit, an entity, and differentiate it from a string of separate sentences. Despite a multiplicity of approaches to texts, their dominant characteristic traits are: informational content, integrity, interdependence of the components, coherence, a uniting idea, and one general aim (Phillips 1985; Galperin 2012). A text, therefore, is regarded as a semantic unit which forms a unified and coherent whole united by a pragmatic aim.

Mari esoteric texts have clear-cut pragmatic goals. This view is shared in this paper through a focus of attention on the poetic aspect of texts, that is, their expressivity. According to pragmatic aims, Mari charms are classified into six types: 1. incantations for healing a) people and b) animals; 2. incantations protecting from witchcraft aimed at a) people, b) animals and c) plants and objects; 3. counter incantations and incantations against witchcraft practiced on a) people, b) animals and c) plants and objects; 4. incantations changing interpersonal relationships among people, spoiling or changing them for the better; 5. incantations bringing good (benefit or profit) to a) people, b) animals and c) plants; and 6. incantations inflicting evil on a) people, b) animals and c) plants (Glukhova 1996: 10).

An overview of the currently available scholarly literature shows the absence of a unified and generally accepted interpretation of incantation. Here we offer a working definition of this folklore genre. A Mari incantation – *shüvedyme, shüvedyme mut* – is an oral, rhythmically organized verbal formula of considerable length, containing a wish, a will or a command. It is employed in a ritual situation and is believed to produce a desired effect under certain conditions because of the magical power both of the word and the person who uses it with definite pragmatic goals.

Different types of texts are marked by different parts of their composition and by their structure. The constituent parts are called supra-phrasal units. They represent combinations of sentences, presenting a structural and a semantic whole with one topic sentence which determines the subject matter of each of them, united by one rhythmic pattern. Mari incantations differ from each other structurally within the wide range of patterns, from complete (having all components of the ritual text) to partial texts (having the most necessary magic text elements) (Glukhova 1997: 12–13). Both complete and incomplete patterns of texts are in everyday use in Mari El.

METHODS AND MATERIAL. METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

At the initial stage of the research, approximately 180 folkloristic texts were collected during the folklore and ethnolinguistic expeditions of the author to different regions of the Republic of Mari El between 1992–1997 and 2008–2013. During field expeditions the main methods used were the observation and interviewing of a considerable percentage of the village inhabitants in every region of the republic, as well as participation in some magic rituals aimed at improving health and relieving stress. The interviews were carried out both with the help of questionnaires that concerned different spheres of Mari traditional culture and without, during unstructured conversation on different topics in an informal atmosphere. The interviews of the informants, mainly local 'tradition bearers', were carried out according to a standard procedure in order to enable comparison between the collected texts.

The next stage included the enrichment of the gathered collection with published texts or by texts from the archives. Then approximately 500 incantations were read and analysed syntactically, semantically and statistically with the aim of determining expressive means and stylistics devices – folklore tropes – as well as their number.

Before defining their syntactic stylistic compositional devices, incantations were analysed from the point of view of grammar: different types of word combinations were discerned and described, and typical types of simple and complex sentences were revealed. The objective of this stage was to show the stylistic potential of both word combinations and sentences.

Stylistic devices or folklore tropes were determined and analysed with the help of componential and contextual types of analysis. The quantitative approach to investigation showed that dominant style markers on a syntactic level are *parallel constructions*, different *types of repetition, enumeration* and *antithesis*. Among folklore tropes, *sustained* and *simple similes*, *tautological epithets*, and *folklore hyperbole* can be considered to be the leading stylistic markers.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Syntactic Expressive Means

An incantation, like any folklore text, has a format which is consistent and repeatable. Texts of charms existed only in spoken (phonic) realization of the Mari language before they were recorded by different scholars during different

periods from the end of the 19th century. Oral text structure is characterized by certain peculiarities depending on a person's ability to organize, remember and reproduce the contents of the text. Therefore, oral texts must be well structured and semantically organized to be easily remembered and transmitted from one generation to the next.

The main principles of text organization have already been described in relation to oral narratives (Siikala 1990: 14–35). The following key points which help to memorize and reprocess the Mari incantation texts can be mentioned here: 1) the pragmatic aim of each text; 2) the selectivity of the lexis connected with pragmatic aims and showing its informational content; 3) a non-linear characteristic of informational content development; 4) constant 'feedback' of a series of events; 5) a limited number of compositional expressive stylistic devices and their specific combination; 6) a restricted set of stylistic devices and a particular way in which they are accumulated (Glukhova 1997: 13).

Expressive means at the syntactic level fulfil their stylistic functions if they are based either on expansion or reduction of basic syntactic patterns. A simple extended sentence having all sentence components may be considered as a 'basic model'. Complex, compound and asyndetic compound sentences will be regarded as basic if they contain short, simple independent clauses.

Simple sentences are considered to be short if they contain from two to six words. If sentences contain more than six words, they are considered to be long sentences. The examined texts have shown that the stylistic means in Mari incantations on a syntactic level are based on the *lengthening* of the basic scheme: the most typical are long and super-long sentences. In incantations they are: 1) simple extended sentences with homogeneous parts and 2) complex sentences with extended subordinate clauses of comparison, condition or time with homogeneous parts in them. A combination of many simple sentences – sentences with chains of homogeneous parts combined into a complex unity – has a rich, stylistic potential. Stylistic effect is achieved within complex sentences of different types with the help of structural interrelation or juxtaposition of a number of simple sentences with syntactically complicated patterns. Expressivity appears as a result of the interrelation of adjacent independent clauses within a sentence or separate sentences within a text fragment.

The most prominent and widely used compositional syntactic devices in Mari charms are: *the lexico-syntactic type of repetition, enumeration, parallel construction (complete,* or *balanced, and incomplete), syntactic repetition* and *anadiplosis and antithesis.* We shall discuss only some of these.

1.1. Types of repetition

The lexico-syntactic type of repetition occupies the first place among expressive means and exists in several varieties. One group of repetition is *linking* (or *anadiplosis*): the last word of one part of an utterance is reiterated at the beginning of the following part. In the charm '*Shüm poshartyshym shörymö*', which aims to prevent heart disease (in some parts it coincides with the text '*Araka jümashym shörymö*' which aims to treat alcoholism) some supra-phrasal units are based on this device:

> Shij erash, shij erash körgyshtö shij pechke, shij pechken körgyshtyžö shiij agytan, shij agytanyn körgyshtyžö shij muno.
> *A silver lake, in the middle of the silver lake there is a silver barrel, in the middle of the silver barrel there is a silver rooster, in the middle of the silver rooster there is a silver egg.* (Glukhova, 1992: 33)

This compositional structure is called *chain repetition*. Another example of this device:

> Er keche lekmashte Osh Viche, Osh Viche pokshekne pünchö kashka, pünchö kashkam… luktyn kertesh gyn, tunam myi vashtareshem tumanlen kyren kertshe!
> *River Vyatka at the early sunrise, in the middle of the river Vyatka there is a pine stump… let him beat me stepping forth against me only then when he gets this pine stump out of the river!* (Petrov 1993: 141)

1.2. Enumeration

Another stylistic device on the syntactic level is *enumeration*. Separate things, different properties and actions may be mentioned one by one in a sentence. Examples of enumeration are found in every charm. In our texts the dominant types are *verb* and *noun* enumeration. In the following examples 'against bewitchment' it is vividly illustrated:

> Indesh chyra dene lümegozh, pyzle voshtyr, shuanvondo voshtyr dene osalym pokten luktam.
> Shörmychym nalyn (1), osh maskam (…osh pirym, osh ryvyzhym, osh meraŋym…) chodyra gych kuchen konden (2), shogavuiym kychken (3), kunam möŋgeshla kural kertesh (4) tunam izhe osalym purten kertshe!
> Shymlu-shym türlö oshmam kunam ik minut-sekundyshto pyrchyn-pyrchyn shotlen pytaren kertesh, tunam izhe myi dekem osalym purten kertshe!

I'll drive away the bewitchment, evil spirit, with the help of a fire of nine splinters, with the help of the juniper twig, mountain ash twig, sweetbrier twig.

Let the sorcerer be able to cast spells when s/he is able, having taken the bridle, to bring a white bear (… a white wolf, a white fox, a white hare…) from the forest, to harness it to the wooden plough, to plough the furrow back!

Let the sorcerer be able to bewitch me, when s/he can count seventy-seven different grains of sand one by one in a minute, in a second! (Glukhova 1992)

The enumeration of the verbs shows that they are linked together in a certain operation. The sequence of actions and specific interdependence of the enumerated types of activity help to create an occasional semantic field in this text.

1.3. Parallelism

The important requirement in parallel construction is a similar structure in parts of sentences in close succession or in two or more sentences of the utterance.

In the chosen incantations parallelism has two modifications: complete (balanced) and incomplete. Balance can be represented by identical structures throughout the whole text or at least within a certain part of it. Thus, in the following example, balance in the text '*Symystaryme*', (a charm which aims to evoke love), is based on the usage of one and the same main clause throughout the whole text and structurally uniform subordinate clauses:

Kuze imne chomažym yshten nula, jörata, tuge myjym shümžö-kylže jöratyže!

Kuze ushkal prezym yshten nula, jörata, tuge myjym shümžö-kylže jöratyže!

Kuze shoryk pacham yshten nula, jörata, tuge myjym shümžö-kylže jöratyže!

Kuze pij igyzym yshten nula, jörata, tuge myjym shümžö-kylže jöratyže!

As a horse brings forth a foal, licks it clean, likes it, so let him love me with all his heart too!

As a cow brings forth a calf, licks it clean, likes it, so let him love me with all his heart too!

As a sheep brings forth a lamb, licks it clean, likes it, so let him love me with all his heart too!

> *As a dog brings forth its puppies, licks them clean, likes them, so let him love me with all his heart too!* (Gorskaja 1969: 37)

In the next example balance is achieved with the help of the same *structural patterns both in the main clause and in the subordinate clause:*

Apshat shondal gych kunam ßür lektesh, tunam iža ner gych ßür jögyžo. Tˮfu! Tˮfu! Tˮfu!

Kü kuryk gych kunam ßür lektesh, tunam iže ner gych ßür jögyžo. Tˮfu! Tˮfu! Tˮfu!

Komaka pundash gych kunam ßür lektesh, tunam iže ner gych ßür jögyžo. Tˮfu! Tˮfu! Tˮfu!

ßozak pundash gych kunam ßür lektesh, tunam iže ner gych ßür jögyžo. Tˮfu! Tˮfu! Tˮfu!'

When blood flows from the locksmith's anvil, only then let it flow from the nose. Pah! Pah! Pah!

When blood flows from the stone mountain, only then let it flow from the nose. Pah! Pah! Pah!

When blood flows from the oven base, only then let it flow from the nose. Pah! Pah! Pah!

When blood flows from the forge base, only then let it flow from the nose. Pah! Pah! Pah! (Evsevjev 1994: 164)

In the corpus of the analysed texts separate charms or parts of them are aimed only at one goal – at *dissolving evil*. These texts are fundamentally based on balance:

Er ÿžara kuze shulen kaja, tugak shulen kajyže!

Kas ÿžara kuze shulen kaja, tugak shulen kajyže!

Er tütyra kuze shulen kaja, tugak shulen kajyže!

Er lups kuze shulen kaja, tugak shulen kajyže!

Let it (evil) melt away like the morning dawn!

Let it melt away like the evening dusk!

Let it melt away like the morning mist!

Let it melt away like the evening dew! (Petrov 1993:133)

Yet not all of the analysed texts are based on balance. Other charms have incomplete parallel constructions as in the text protecting the user from evil:

Maskalan shincha kunam ßožesh, tunam iže shincha ßochsho!

Pirelan shincha kunam ßožesh, tunam iže shincha ßochsho!

Ryßyžlan shincha kunam ßožesh, tunam iže shincha ßochsho!

Toi ßedram shincha kunam ßožesh, tunam iže shincha ßochsho!

užar shincha, kande shincha, shem shincha, sur shincha, ske jüžym ske paremdyže. T'fu!

Let the evil eye bewitch me only when it bewitches a bear!

Let the evil eye bewitch me only when it bewitches a wolf!

Let the evil eye bewitch me only when it bewitches a fox!

Let the evil eye bewitch me only when it bewitches <u>a tin bucket</u>!

Let green eye, blue eye, black eye, grey eye, heal with its own spirit! Pah!

(Glukhova 2008: 12)

The first three sentences form a complete balance. In the fourth sentence, the subordinate clause differs from the previous sentences as the object comprises the noun phrase. The use of the phrase makes this sentence longer, thus changing the structure into incomplete parallelism. Among syntactic expressive means in the analysed texts, lexico-syntactic repetition takes the first place (69%), then enumeration (16%), followed by parallel constructions (10%). The remaining 5% fall into the categories lexical repetition and antithesis.

2. Tropes

Among the leading tropes in the analysed incantations are epithets (82%), hyperbole (11%), and simile (7%).

2.1. Epithet

An *epithet* is a trope based on the correlation of logical and emotive meaning in the adjective expressing a quality or attribute. Epithets are employed to characterize specific properties of the objects evaluating them. In the examined incantations there are two groups of epithets: tautological (traditional) and explanatory. They are expressed by: 1) qualitative adjectives, 2) relative adjectives, and 3) nouns playing the role of relative adjectives or words of undifferentiated semantics. All these groups are equally represented in the investigated material.

Qualitative adjectives in the function of epithets are used mainly in the positive degree:

Shem (joshkar, narynche, užarge) ßüdyshtö shem (joshkar, narynche, užarge) shargüm shinchapunžo dene kunam nalyn kertesh, tunam iže shincha ßochsho!

When in the black (red, yellow, green) water he (the sorcerer) is able to pick uptake a black (red, yellow, green) pebble with his eyelashes, only then let him bewitch me with the evil eye! (Shaberdin 1973: 8)

And again in this extract:

> Osh jeng, os tengyžyshke kajen, osh oshmam konden, sholagaj kandaram
> punen kertesh gyn, tunam iže … shincha ßožen kertshe!
> *If the white man is able to go to the white sea, to bring some white sand,*
> *to twine the rope of the left twining, only then let him be able to bewitch*
> *me with the evil eye!* (Glukhova, 2008: 52)

Structurally, epithets in the analysed incantations are classified into *simple
single epithets* and *compound epithets*. Furthermore, in some texts, chains of
epithets may occur. Simple epithets are expressed by qualitative adjectives, as
was shown in the previous examples. *Relative adjectives* are also quite often
used as epithets:

> Choman ßül'ö kuze shke chomažym jörata, tuge myjym jöratyže!
>   Pachan shoryk kuze shke pachažym jörata,
>   tuge myjym jöratyže!
> *As a mare with a foal likes its foal, let him love me too!*
>   *As a sheep with a lamb likes its lamb, let him love me too!* (Gorskaja
> 1969: 14)

Epithets expressed by nouns are numerous in the examined material:

> Chodyra shordo shörtn'ö shinchyr dene shörtn'ö mengesh kylten sho-
> galten, merang üj dene omdykten, shörtn'ö kümažysh lüshten, shörtn'ö
> kümyž-soßla dene 77 türlö kalykym ik minutyshto pukshen-jükten kunam
> kertes, tunam iže ushkalyn onchylym nalyn kertshe!
> *When he is able to tie a forest elk with a golden chain to a golden pole,*
> *to soften its udder with hare's butter, to milk it into a golden dish, in a*
> *minute, to feed 77 different peoples on golden plates with golden spoons,*
> *only then let him be able to take my cow's first milk!* (Shaberin 1973: 20)

Compound epithets are built on a more complicated pattern, as is seen from
the following examples: *shij-tükan üskyz* 'a bull with silver horns' and *shörtn'ö
-punan ushkal* 'a cow with golden hair'. In the analysed corpus of incantations
epithets maybe organized in certain chains: *tale tütan mardež* 'strong hurricane
wind', *püsö pulat kerde* 'sabre made of Damascus steel', etc.

2.2. Hyperbole

The incantations examined for this study are rich in *hyperbole*, which is a sty-
listic device commonly known as a deliberate overstatement or exaggeration.

Therefore, any described feature inherent in the object, different phenomena or even whole situations can be exaggerated.

Texts may contain simple hyperbole as seen in the following passage:

Mündyr üžaram kunam posharen kertesh, tunam iže posharen kertse!
Er-kechym kunam posharen kertesh, tunam iže posharen kertse!
When he [the sorcerer] is able to bewitch a far-away dawn, only then let him be able to bewitch me!
When he is able to bewitch the morning sun, only then let him be able to bewitch me! (Porkka 1895: 32)

Hyperbole in this text appears due to the understanding of apparent discrepancy between the normal flow of events and imaginary situation depicted in the incantation. Hyperbolical situations in the texts can include two or more exaggerated conditions which are practically impossible to accomplish:

Pyrys den pij kunam ßash öndal malen kertesh, tunam iže Vasli den Anna pyrl'ya ilen kertysht!
Pire den maska kunam ßas öndal malen kertesh, tunam iže Vasli den Anna pyrl'ya ilen kertysht!
When a cat and a dog, having embraced each other, can sleep together, only then let Vasilii and Anna live together!
When a bear and a wolf, having embraced each other, can sleep together, only then let Vasilii and Anna live together! (Gorskaja 1969: 19)

The most typical overstated circumstances in the examined material are connected with the time of specific actions and the number of conditions to be carried out:

Shymlu shym türlö mlande ümbalne nylle ik choman ßül'ö shke chomažym ik minutyshto shke pomyshkyžo kuze pogen nalesh, tugak tudynat shüm- mokshyžo ik minut žapyshte myjyn mogyrysh saßyrnyže!
As in a minute in seventy-seven different countries forty-one mares gather their own foals, let his heart / liver stick to me in a minute! (Gorskaja 1969: 25)

In the next example – *Loktysh dech* 'Against Witchcraft' – the stress is laid on the number of conditions:

Shörtn'ö üshtym üshtalynat, shörtn'ö tovarym chykenat, shörtn'ö meŋgym ruenat, shörtn'ö meŋgym kerynat, shörtn'ö pidyshym pidynat, shörtn'ö pechem pechenat, shörtn'ö imn'ym kychkenat, shörtn'ö omytam

chiktenat, shörtn'ö örynchakym pyshtenat, shörtn'ö pügym rualynat, shörtn'ö sapkeremym pushtenat, shörtn'ö shagavui dene kuralynyt, shörtn'ö urlykkomdo dene üdenat, shörtn'ö tyrma dene tyrmalenat, shörtn'ö shurno shochyn, shörtn'ö sorla dene türedynyt, shörtn'ö kyltam yshtenat, shörtn'ö orvash opten naŋgayenat, shörtn'ö idymysh shörtn'ö shagesh shörtn'ö kavanym yshtenat, shörtn'ö idymymsh voltenat, shörtn'ö agunysh shyndenat, shörtn'ö idymysh luktyn, shörtn'ö sapondo dene kyrenat, shörtn'ö üshtervoshtyr dene üshtynat, shörtn'ö kolmo dene pualtenat, shörtn'ö meshakysh optenat, shörtn'ö vaksh deke naŋgayenat, shörtn'ö vakshküesh shörtn'ö lozhashym ioŋyshtenat, shörtn'ö shokte dene shoktynat, shörtn'ö ruashvochkesh shörtn'ö ruashym lugenat, shörtn'ö koŋgash shörtn'ö kindym küktenat, shörtn'ö üstembake luktynat, shörtn'ö kümyzh-sovla dene kunam pyrlya jüyn-kochkyn kertat tide kindym yshten shukten, tunam izhe myiym lokten kert!

Only then can you bewitch me when, having put on a golden belt, and having stuck (into a golden belt) a golden axe and having felt a golden pole, and having put up a golden pole, and having fastened it by a golden band and having enclosed the space by a golden fence and having harnessed a golden horse, and having put on a golden horse's collar, and having saddled it with a golden saddle, and having put on a shaft bow, and having tied up golden reins, and having ploughed with a golden plough, and having sown from a golden basket, and having harrowed by a golden harrow, and, after the golden corn has been ripened, having reaped by a golden sickle, and having bound a golden sheaf, and having placed it on a golden cart, and having made a golden stack on the golden perches on the golden threshing ground, and having lowered it on the golden threshing ground, and having placed it into a golden barn for crops, and having carried it out onto the golden threshing ground, and having thrashed it with golden flails, and having swept it with a golden broom, and having raked it up with a golden shovel, and having filled golden sacks, and having brought it to a golden windmill, and having ground it to golden flour by the golden millstones, and having screened it by a golden sieve, and having kneaded golden dough in a golden trough, and having put golden firewood into a golden oven, and having baked golden bread in the golden oven, and having put it out onto a golden table, together with me you can eat the baked bread from golden plates and dishes! (Petrov 1993: 48–49)

Enumerating several conditions and using hyperbole, therefore, does not only serve as a simple separate stylistic device in incantations. Hyperbole appears to be the text's constituent factor.

In addition to simple and sustained hyperbole, *numerical hyperbole* is of particular interest in the examined material, for example, in the incantation '*Razymym shörymö*' (Against Rheumatism):

> 77 türlö ßüdysh kajen, 77 türlö küjym kudalten, 77 türlö rožym shüten küeshyže, tushan 77 türlö mengym keryn, 77 menge ßujyshto 77 türlö imym kerlyn … ik shagat, ik minutyshto tache kechyn imyshke shogalyn, shüsken-muren kunam kertes, tunam iže (tide ajdemym) kochkyn-jüyn kertshe!
>
> *When it [the spirit of rheumatism] is able to get into 77 waters, throw 77 different stones, make 77 different holes, put 77 poles into these holes, put 77 needles into the bases of these 77 poles … and then, staying on these needles for an hour and a minute, to whistle and sing, only then let the spirit of rheumatism be able to drink and eat (this man)!* (Petrov 1993: 83)

Such numerals as 'one', 'seven', 'nine', 'eleven' and 'seventy-seven' are amply used in the texts. They are considered to be magical among Finno-Ugrians (Petrukhin 2005: 269).

Complex numerals are also used in the incantations. A good example is a passage from the incantation '*Shulymo*' (Evil Dissolving):

> …77 türlö mlande ßalne er pokshym kuze shulen kaja, tugak shulen kajyze!
>
> 77 türlö mlande ßalne er tütyra kuze shulen kaja, tugak shulen kajyze!
> 77 türlö mlande ßalne er lups kuze shulen kaja, tugak shulen kajyze!
> 100, 99, 98, 97, 96, 95, 94, 93, 92, 91. Nimat uke!
>
> Loktysh, poshartysh, ovylymo, shinchavochmo, jylmepuryltmo, marii cher, rush cher, koshtyra, nimat uke!
>
> …*How the morning hoarfrost disappears in 77 different lands, let his sorcery disappear!*
>
> *How the morning mist disappears in 77 different lands, let his sorcery disappear!*
>
> *How the morning dew disappears in 77 different lands, let his sorcery disappear!*
>
> *100, 99, 98, 97, 96, 95, 94, 93, 92, 91. Nothing is here.*
>
> *There is no sorcery, no taint (damage), no evil eye, no evil tongue, no Russian disease, no Mari disease, no skin disease, nothing!*
>
> (Petrov 1993: 133)

The last passage is repeated nine more times. The numerals are also reiterated nine times, each time reduced in/by ten units.

2.3. Simile

The investigated incantations are rich in similes, too. Simile is a device whereby two concepts are imaginatively and descriptively compared, leading to the intensification of one of the features becoming prominent. Structurally, similes are figurative language means with an explicitly expressive referent and agent – the first and second components of the device. A simile has formal elements showing comparison in its structural pattern: they are connectives, usually postpositions or conjunctions: *gaj, semyn; kuze …tuge / tugak.* In the majority of the investigated incantations similes are based on comparison but not on the contrast of different phenomena of reality.

Analysis of the incantations showed that on grounds of expediency it is necessary to classify figurative comparisons into *simple similes* and *sustained similes* (or *situational similes*). This taxonomy reveals a qualitative difference in the complex character of these objects of analysis, on the one hand, and on the other, it corresponds to grammatical differences in their syntactic structures.

A large group of incantations is based structurally and semantically on the situational simile, which has a specific linguistic form. It has grammar indicators – two conjunctions: *kuze* (as) in the subordinate clause and *tuge / tugak* (so) in the main clause. The situational simile retains some features of a simple simile. It becomes apparent when a verb (predicate) in the subordinate clause is not semantically independent but is closely connected with a verb (predicate) in the main clause. Manifestation of such semantic ties is the repetition of one and the same verb in both parts of the complex sentence:

> …Shochmo keche kuze nöltesh, tuge tide eŋyn kapshe-kylže, kidshe-jolžo nöltshö!
>
> Kushkyzhmo keche kyze nöltesh, tuge tide eŋyn kapshe-kylže, kidshe-jolžo nöltshö!
>
> Vÿrgeche keche kuze nöltesh, tuge tide eŋyn kapshe-kylže, kidshe-jolžo nöltshö!
>
> Izarnya keche kuze nöltesh, tuge tide eŋyn kapshe-kylže, kidshe-jolžo nöltshö!
>
> …*As the sun on Monday rises, so let this man's body, arms-legs also rise!*
>
> *As the sun on Tuesday rises so let this man's body, arms-legs also rise!*
>
> *As the sun on Wednesday rises so let this man's body, arms-legs also rise!*
>
> *As the sun on Thursday rises so let this man's body, arms-legs also rise!*
>
> (Petrov 1993: 128)

Sometimes the verbs in both parts can be contextual synonyms, as is seen in the following extract:

> Shopke lyshtash kuze kushtylgyn kaja, tugak myjyn imnem kushtylgyn modyn kynel koshtsho! T'fu!
> *As the aspen leaf lightly rises falling from the tree, so let my horse, lightly rising, playfully go! Pah!* (Evsevjev 1994: 175)

It is interesting to note that simple and sustained similes and hyperboles create the concepts of *impossibility* (*improbability)* and *inevitability* of events and actions. Their usage reveals the intuitive nation's knowledge of several concepts from contemporary probability theory (Glukhova and Glukhov 2008: 108–118).

CONCLUSION

This paper has considered the salient textual features of Mari incantations, revealing stylistic markers on the syntactic and lexical levels of this folklore genre. The combination of known approaches and techniques has made it possible to obtain valuable information on the expressive character of the folklore style of these ancient esoteric texts.

Folklore texts, being complex phenomena, demand different lines of approach because they can be viewed as an oral performance, on the one hand, and as a written text, on the other. This dual character has required a particular manner of analysis and the implementation of a theory of composition.

Well-established techniques such as componential and contextual analyses yielded a variant of pragmatic-semantic classification, according to which six types of texts cover practically all the spheres of human activity. The areas of text application have been obtained by these techniques.

Composition theory, which has a considerable promise as a means of revealing text properties, has been extended to the examination of charms. Treated as compositionally organized entities, incantations have revealed stylistically relevant structural characteristics. A predominance of structural, stylistically distinctive traits over lexical and semantic characteristics is testimony to their crucial role in text composition. Their prevalence is an aid to better memorization and text reprocessing. What is more, it shows the specific style quality of this genre of Mari folklore.

Stylistically significant features in incantations occur at each of the levels traditionally distinguished in linguistics. A distinctive type of rhythm, approximating the rhythm of syllabo-tonic verses, a morphological kind of rhyme, alliteration and assonance, and onomatopoeia, reflecting certain aspects of real-

ity, are phonological stylistic markers in charms and compositional phonological stylistic devices. They have all been described in the author's previous works.

Syntactic devices, showing external relationships in sentences, supra-phrasal units and whole texts are based on the expansion of the basic sentence patterns and are of great stylistic importance. Actual parallel construction, enumeration, chain-repetition and anadiplosis represent compositional syntactic stylistic devices.

Compositional stylistic devices, especially syntactic ones, communicate a consolidating effect to the parts of the texts, bringing strict regularity and order into the structural scheme of the utterance; it enhances the general aesthetic impression. It is accomplished by a variety of repetition types.

Repetition on the syntactic levels is intimately connected with the lexical types of repetition. The combination of these types creates lexical and semantic homogeneity of the text and makes new syntactic, lexical or semantic components more prominent against the background of the reiterated elements. Thus repetition fulfils a background function.

Semantic stylistic means characterize objects, actions and phenomena, showing an evaluating attitude of the community towards them (fixed, through epithets); throw an unexpected light on the compared objects (similes, metaphors); and show different situations and things in their untrue dimensions (hyperbole).

These stylistic devices have one point in common: they bear an imprint of the collective imagination. Consequently, they can be called 'folklore epithets', 'folklore similes', 'folklore hyperbole' or 'folklore metaphors'.

The stylistic folklore devices of each level enumerated above demonstrate the high linguistic culture of their creators and the highly developed Mari people's verbal art.

The language of incantations reflects humans' closeness to nature and to the surrounding landscape. It shows that some of the most fundamental activities of humans are inextricably entwined with their natural environment. Worldview is reflected in the intuitive notions contained in the examined incantations.

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