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World Images Mythological Floral Motifs of the English, Russian and Tatar Language

Motivos florales mitológicos de las imágenes del mundo en inglés, ruso y tártaro

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ABSTRACT

This paper is concerned with plant motifs in mythology in three different linguistic cultures – english, russian and tatar. The interest in the symbolism of flora is due to its wide distribution in world culture, reflected in mythological representations and various literary genres. Plants and trees, which are recognized as cultural concepts, are among the objects studied by the authors. It is analyzed mythological texts, modern linguists' special considerations relating to nature concepts, the use of plant motifs in three linguistic world images, and the objectification of these images in national cultural consciences.

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Keywords: Ethnic affiliation, flora, linguistic world image, linguistics, mythology.

RESUMEN

Este artículo se ocupa de los motivos florales en la mitología en tres culturas lingüísticas diferentes: inglesa, rusa y tártara. El interés por el simbolismo de la flora se debe a su amplia distribución en la cultura mundial, reflejada en representaciones mitológicas y diversos géneros literarios. Plantas y árboles reconocidos como conceptos culturales se encuentran entre los objetos estudiados por los autores. Se analizan textos mitológicos, las consideraciones especiales de los lingüistas modernos relacionadas con los conceptos de la naturaleza, el uso de motivos florales en tres imágenes del mundo lingüístico y la objetivación de estas imágenes en las conciencias culturales nacionales.

Palabras clave: Afilación étnica, flora, imagen lingüística del mundo, lingüística, mitología.

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INTRODUCTION

A profound interest in the study of linguistic phenomena that reflect the national identity of an ethnos within the scope of cultural linguistics, the branch of linguistics, is the study of the relationship between language and culture. The study of flora concepts mirrored in the real image of the world through the person's inner world is of real research interest since it gives an opportunity to elicit not only the anthropocentrism of a particular language, but also helps to reveal universal patterns of reflection of various aspects of human consciousness in the naive world image (Gupta:1987; Kulyk: 2011, pp.627-648; Gizatova et al.: 2017, pp.1368-1379; Malyuga&McCarthy: 2018, pp.39-52). From this perspective, the analysis of the flora contributes to its understanding in various (English, Russian and Tatar) linguistic views of the world (Schmidt:2010; Friederici: 2017; Tsapko et al.: 2018, pp.121-129).

In the mythological traditions of ancient peoples, worship of various plant species dates back to antiquity, primarily trees, which were endowed with special sacredness. It was observed long ago that stones, water and trees were necessarily present in the most ancient of the famous sanctuaries. Such a sacred landscape was a model of the whole world in the eyes of a primitive man (Joseph:2004; Buckingham: 2016; Alexander:2017, pp.115-126; Hester&Housley: 2017).

METHODOLOGY

In the modern world, the issues of importance, in our opinion, are those related to comparative-contrastive analysis, which allows one to single out the peculiarity of a linguistic phenomenon and bring it into line with similar ones.

Data for the study of the semantics of the concept of flora was the data from a continuous sample of mythological texts, as well as fiction. We have produced the interlinear translation of the examples from Tatar in cases of absence of official translations.

The study of linguistic and cultural objects is proposed to be carried out using the systemic approach, which encompasses semiotics, and allows one to get a complete body of knowledge about them as the units in which the linguistic and extralinguistic contents are dialectically related. Semiotics is understood as a general theory of the sign, the origin of which is associated with the works by C. Morris Writings on General Theory of Signs (1938) (Morris: 1965, pp.356-364).

Currently, the concepts of flora are an object of concern of various sciences. In culturology, it generates a real interest as a universal sign system, due to the existence of a mythological model of the world in human consciousness, which describes the specifics of national variants of the World Tree and various manifestations of plant symbolism in spiritual and material cultures – clothing, ideas about the ideal of the human body, everyday objects, as confirmed by prof. G.D. Gachev in his lecture collection National Images of the World (Gachev: 1998). Myths and legends are the material on the basis of which research aimed at identifying ideas associated with plant images in folk cultures is conducted.

Depending on the level of complexity, the concept may exist in the scientific, everyday and mythological consciousness (Ashrapova et al.: 2019, pp.44-50). The latter is the oldest of the forms of social consciousness. It is peculiar not to any one time, but to people of all times, standing at a certain degree of development of thought; it is formal, that is, it does not exclude any content: neither religious, nor philosophical, nor scientific. The main features of mythological consciousness according to M. S. Kaganare: concreteness, indivisibility, imagery (Kagan: 2001).

RESULTS

For the first time, “tree” as an image was analyzed at the level of mythopoetic consciousness of people of different linguistic and cultural communities in the second half of the 20th century by Russian linguists V. V. Ivanov and V. N. Toporov (Ivanov & Toporov: 1974). The conclusion about the importance and significance of this image in the cultural development of man has been drawn. A tree grows, sheds its leaves and puts forth new leaves, that is, it has been “dying” and “coming back to life” innumerable times. Due to its strength and power, thanks to its endless renewals, the tree for a person of archaic cultures mirrored the Cosmos as a whole, became the image of the Universe.

The mythological studies have shown that the image of the World Tree is witnessed almost everywhere either in its pure form or in variants (often emphasizing a particular function): “tree of life”, “tree of fertility”, “tree of center”, “tree of ascension”, “tree of heaven”, “shamanic tree”, “mystical tree”, “tree of knowledge”, etc. With the help of the World Tree across the spectrum of its cultural and historical variants (including such its transformations or images isofunctional to it as “axis of the world”, “world pillar”, “world mountain”, “world man”, temple, triumphal arch, column, obelisk, throne, staircase, cross, chain, etc.) the general binary semantic oppositions serving to describe the basic parameters of the world are brought together (Kubryakova: 1991). The tree in minds of its admirers was a symbol of the connection between all three cosmic zones: the Sky (crown), the Earth (trunk) and the Underworld (roots).

The object of mythologization was not only the very tree, but also its parts: roots, branches, leaves, buds, flowers, fruit. In folk songs each of these parts conveys a certain message.

Many English-speaking peoples believe that after death, life does not end, it turns into a new hypostasis, “strangely enough, it was Melkin who was carried away by home and garden, as for Prihott, he wandered, whistling, in the vicinity, contemplating trees and especially the main tree” (Tolkien: 2002). So does J.R.R. Tolkien, in his work *The Lord of the Rings* he hopes that after death a person will gain integrity and an adequate understanding of the world.

For the druids – the ancestors of the Irish and the British – the tree, venerated by people, was a symbol of the continuousness of life, of reason. Moreover, the family tree watched many generations of the human community, it kept the information of ancestors. A tree was planted on the child’s birthday (this custom still exists), and it became, as it were, the twin born, its spiritual relative and protector. It communicated with the man reflexively, the man’s ailments were transmitted to it, and the ill done to the tree rebounded upon the well-being of the man.

The ancestors of the English held to the same views as other peoples of the world regarding oak. It personifies strength, power, confidence, steadfastness, severity. Oaks were dedicated to ancient Greek gods Zeus, Heracles, Cybele, Phoenician god Melkart, Germanic Thor, Slavic Perun, rituals, rites, holidays were held under it.

So, in ancient mythologies, the tree turned into the Cosmic tree located in the Center of the World, or the World Tree, the Tree of Life and Immortality. Since it is a symbol of the Center of the World, its analogues are other symbols of the Center of the World, such as “Axis of the World”, “World Pillar”, “World Mountain”.

The classic image of the World Tree, embodying the Cosmos in its wholeness, is the famous ash-tree Yggdrasil of Scandinavian mythology from *Older Edda*. Shirokova N.S. in her book *Myths of the Celtic Peoples* confronts the readers with the mythological history of the settlement of Ireland and argues that Celtic myths also center around the cosmic tree the roots of which go to the deepest depths in the earth, and the top touches the sky. There were as many cosmic trees, sometimes also called the “world tree”, as many provinces in Ireland. These great sacred trees appear in the saga *The Enumeration of the House of Tara*, which tells about the division of Ireland into five provinces (Shirokova: 2017).

Not only trees, but also some herbs were sacred in English culture. They were used in plant magic was integral to the Celtic traditional world. For example, the magical and healing power of some plants in archaic cultures was explained by their divine origin.

In the saga *The Destruction of DaDerga's Hostel* we find such an analogue of the World Tree as the central pillar of the house of Da Derga; the description of this house apparently represents in some respects the mythological picture of the world. The road led to Da Derga's hostel, crossing it all the way through. In this house there were seven chambers and seven doors that never closed. When a fire was lit in the hearth and a log was taken out of the fire, flames wallowed from each door. The mystical number of seven is closely connected with the symbols of the World Tree and the Axis of the World. The identification of the World Tree of seven branches with seven planetary heavens goes back to Mesopotamian mythology. However, similar ideas are found in other cultures. For example, the concept of seven heavens is common to all of Southeast Siberia: a shaman climbs a tree or a pillar with seven notches representing seven heavenly levels

In ancient mythologies, the image of the World Tree is often associated with the motif of a sacred source. So, in the Scandinavian tradition at the roots of Yggdrasil there is a wonderful source of Urth. Water nourishes the giant tree and gives it youth and strength, and on the banks of the Urth the gods daily hold counsel and serve justice. Not far from Yggdrasil there is also the source of wisdom, Mimer, where Odin put one eye in pledge and where he constantly returns to enrich his wisdom.

Oak, ash and yew are revered more than other trees in English mythology. It is widely believed that the main sacred tree was oak, which generally played an important role in the mythological concepts of the Indo-European peoples (it suffices to recall the sacred oak of Zeus in his sanctuary in Dodon). In fact, among the five sacred trees of Ireland, the great oak *EoMugna* reigns supreme. Celts, for example, revered other trees as well. So, the three of Ireland's five sacred trees are ash; the World Tree of Scandinavian mythology Yggdrasil belonged to it. And finally, the embodiment of the World Tree and the Axis of the World is yew *Eo Rosa*, described in the saga *Dindsenchas*.

The ancient Russian people also lived in close harmony with nature. Natural phenomena and individual natural objects were sacred and were part of a holistic mythological world image. The cult of sacred groves was widespread throughout Northern Europe: the cult of tree existed among the Finno-Ugric peoples, the Slavs, the Baltic peoples and the peoples of Siberia.

The place of human settlement, the characteristics of its environment affect national traditions and way of life. Historically, the Slavs settled on the forested, marshy plains or hills, on the banks of the rivers. The place of settlement determined a rather peaceful disposition of the nation, as well as the main types of occupations – picking, farming, hunting. The rich flora and fauna did not require much effort from people to search for food and to construct houses. However, the general tendency in relation to the surrounding natural area are historically traced in the cultures of related and even completely different peoples living in excellent climatic and natural environments.

Plants, grass, trees, according to the legends of the ancients, have supernatural powers – both healing and destructive. For example, birch, oak, spruce, apple tree, pear, cherry among the Slavs are symbols of a good start; viburnum, mountain ash, aspen are the symbols of misfortune. The basis of these representations is the archetype of the totem tree.

DISCUSSION

Myths of various nations tell of totem trees. The Yakuts especially revered an insulated birch; the Tuvans – larch. The Sakhalin Nivkhs have a myth about their origin from larch or spruce. The peoples of the Malay-Indonesian region believe that rice is not just the basis of nutrition, but it is a symbol of very life. Rye, fern flower and other plants have similar meaning for the Slavs. So, *рожь* (rye) has the same root with the words *родить* (give birth), *урожай* (harvest); *жито* (spring buckwheat) is another name for *рожь* (rye) that originates

from the verb жить (live). This shows how rye was important for our ancestors – it was the basis of life. Лоза (vine) has a special symbolic burden in Christian cultures: Christ spoke of himself, “I am the vine,” and the disciples were, as it were, its branches.

The tree among the Slavs is a motif for introducing to the world of ancestors, which is contingent to both natural factors, and folklore and ritual traditions, and a centuries-old agricultural way of life, and mythical ideas about the world tree, the tree of life.

The traces of such ideas as the correlation of a tree with three parts of the body – the head, the trunk and the legs – are found in Tatar poetry. Regarding poetics, in this case one can only speak about the top in the often repeated expression “агачбашында” (agachbashinda) – “on the top (literally – “on the head”) of the tree”.

The Turkic peoples – the Tatars belong to them – have such notion as киреметь (кирямят, кярмят) which most often denotes the spirit of a sacred tree or a spring. The word “киреметь” they use to call places, springs, trees, which are protected by spirits, or, as Carlos Castaneda would call them in his works “energetic inorganic entities”. The worship of such spirits from all Türks was most preserved by the Chuvashes in performing a rite near a tree. Кирямят (kiryamyat) is an ancient sacred tree (oak, elm, spruce) or a tree near which animals are offered in sacrifice. Various things are hung on this tree, venerating the spirit living there. Ill people come to that tree and hang towels on it, after which it is believed that the spirits present them with a recovery. It is prohibited to litter, crap near these trees, as well as to break branches and take them along.

The memory of this remain with the names of the villages. For example, in the Aktanyshsky district of Tatarstan there is a village of ОлыМән (Olymen) – Улиманово (Ulimanovo) (literally – “Old Oak”). On the banks of the Karachay River of Khurzuk there is a sacred tree “джанызТерек” (DzhanyzTerek), which the Karachays worshiped even after the adoption of Islam. There are villages that have retained the word “кирямят” (kiryamyat) in their names. It is known that in the Aksubaevsky district of Tatarstan, in the villages of StarayaKiremet and VerkhnyayaKiremet, no later than the 17th century, there lived service Tatarsians-Kryashens and the Chuvashes. The ancient Chuvashes and other Türks worshiped mountains, springs and trees – the Nature itself.

Representations of the ancestors of the Tatars were also inherent in assigning to every third part of the tree of animals: the upper – birds, the middle – ungulates, bees, the lower – small animals.

It was believed that in the core of the Tree of Life – one of the variants of the World Tree – life and immortality are hidden. An illustrative way of life was especially represented by trees the life span of which significantly exceeded the man’s: oak, willow, larch, cedar, banyan. All of them, one way or another, were reflected in the lyrics of the Tatars.

Since plant motifs in mythology belong to the national cultural consciousness, the material for study was fiction and mythological literature, which is a source of knowledge and values of the nation, reflecting its culture.

The complex of mythological representations accumulated in the vocabulary of English folk works is contingent on the peculiarities of archaic thinking, manifested in the endowment of a word (pronounced or written) with sacred properties; animistic and totemic beliefs, which are reflected in the embodiment of the forces of nature, the cult of worshiping trees, the agricultural cult and the related cult of worshiping the night luminary, the cult of ancestors, which were embodied in a number of ritual actions and prohibitions (rite of passage, marriage rituals and taboos, taboo to personal names).

The cult of trees is a respectful, reverent, caring attitude to a natural object, filled with magic, mythology, knowledge of traditional medicine. Precisely because of its belonging to the two worlds the feature of this concept is its ubiquity, it is entrenched in many cultures and holds a valuable place in mythopoetic representations. The motif of dying and rebirth is traced in the image of tree, as the tree experiences the periods of withering and blossoming. The roots symbolize the lower part, the underworld, as well as the beginning of something, and the tip of the tree – the height, the top of the world. The long standing of trees, their relatively long life gives rise to the idea of immortality. “Combining depth and height not only in space but

also in time, the tree acts as a symbol of memory of the past, an image of eternity per se. Hence the motif of tree planting that spread in the 20th century as a symbol of conscious and man-made immortality." (Maslova: 2008).

CONCLUSION

As a result of the analysis of the linguistic conceptualization of flora in the English, Russian and Tatar linguistic world views and consideration of the theoretical material of the problem, we come to the conclusion that cognitive research that traces its roots only to the end of the previous century has become an integral part of modern linguistic science, which is contingent on the emergence and rapid development of such science as cultural linguistics. Floral motifs are of great interest to linguists, as they certainly mirror a part of the world of the ethnos under study.

Each culture has its own objectification of reality, forming its own linguistic world image. Language is the main means of fixing ideas and knowledge about the world, which finds its manifestation in the specific human perception of reality. A person, knowing objective reality, fixes the amount of knowledge about it in language, which can be defined as a linguistic image of the world. Thus, a person constructs his/her speech behavior based on the world image that is peculiar to him/her.

According to mythological studies, the image of the World Tree is witnessed almost everywhere either in its pure form or in its variants. In addition to Scandinavian mythology, the image of the world tree or the tree of life is in the ideas of the Slavs (an almost complete copy of Yggdrasil). A similar image is found in Turkic legends. In most of these cultures, the tree appears to be the world axis – a connection of different levels and dimensions.

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