



RELIGIOUS FAITHS AND MYTHS AS SOURCES OF IDIOMS (SET EXPRESSIONS) IN TURKISH AND RUSSIAN LANGUAGES*

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ABSTRACT

This article is about research of religious and mythic idioms in two non-relative languages, having nevertheless very long history of mutual penetration - Turkish and Russian. Multiple examples of such idioms in both languages are given in the article, as well as the significant role played by religious traditions and beliefs in formation and spread of such expressions is underlined. Scientific works of famous Turkish and Russian linguists, devoted to research of the origin proverbs and sayings are used as a theoretical support. As a result of the conducted research we can state that the holy books Koran and Bible together with previous pagan beliefs played a significant role in formation of idioms in languages of both nations, accordingly Koran impacted Turkish language, thanks to the Islam, accepted by Turks, and Bible made the same influence onto the Russian language after acceptance of Christianity. The idioms coming from fairy tales and from the ancient Greek legends into both languages are also stated. In the final part of the article we have run an overview of the use of idioms in folklore and written literature of both nations, and can resume the poets and writers paid a great attention to enrichment of their works with the named products of public creative activity.

KeyWords: Russian language, Turkish language, idioms, religion, source.

TÜRK VE RUS DİLLERİNDE DİNİ VE EFSANEVİ KÖKENLİ DEYİMLER

ÖZET

Bu makale birbiriyle jenetik akraba olmayan, fakat buna ragmen çok eskiden birbirine kelimelerinin geçme tarihi olan iki dilde, yani Türk ve Rus dillerinde çok kullanılan dini veya efsanevi kökenli deyimlerin ve atasözlerinin araştırılmasına dair bir çalışmadır. Makalede bu türlü, yani içerisinde Allah, Kuran, Cennet vs. gibi kelimeler olan deyimlerin her iki dilde olan çok sayılı örnekleri İngilizceye harfi çevirisiyle verilmiş, onların yaranmasında, oluşmasında ve yayılmasında milletlerin dini törelerinin ve inançlarının önemli olduğu vurgulanmış, ünlü Türk ve Rus dilbilim uzmanlarının

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deyimlerin kökeni konusundaki değerli çalışmaları ise teorik destek olarak kullanılmıştır. Yaptığımız incelemenin sonucu olarak kutsal kitaplar Kuran ve İncil'in kendilerinden önce çok yaygın olmuş çeşitli putperestlik inancları ile birlikte her iki milletin dilindeki deyimlerin oluşmasında önemli bir rol oynadığını söyleyebiliriz. Yani, İslamın kutsal kitabı olan Kuran Müslüman türklerin dilini tarih boyunca her ne kadar etkilemişse, İncil'de hristyanılığa kabul etmiş Rusların diline bir o kadar etki yapmıştır. Aynı zamanda, makalemizde Türk ve Rus dillerine masallardan ve antik Yunan efsanelerinden gelen ve günümüzde kullanılan deyimler de gösterilmiştir. Makalenin final bölümünde dini kökenli deyimlerin her iki büyük milletin sözlü ve yazılı edebiyatında kullanımını gözden geçirilmiştir. Buna dayanarak şairlerle yazarların halk yaratıcılığının adı geçen ürünlerle çok önem verdiklerini ve kendi eserlerinin dilini zenginleştirmek amacıyla onlardan bolca yararlandığını söyleyebiliriz.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Rusdili, Türkdili, deyimler, din, kaynak.

1. Idioms coming from Islam religion in Turkish language

Arise of idioms in language of any nation is strongly related both to its daily life and activity, and the faiths existing for centuries and thus influencing the daily life of people as well. Turkish scientist Hilmi Adigozel stated (1990:21): "Ne zaman söylendiği belli olmayan bu güzel sözlerin manalarında milletimizin yaşayışı yatar" (Life of our nation is reflected in the meanings of these nice words, expressed in unknown time). In modern Turkish language the Muslim religion, having been professed by Turks for many centuries played the most important role in formation of the idioms, having faiths as the main source. In our opinion, this process may be continued in future since the role of religion in the modern Turkish society is still very strong.

For example, the expression "Zemzem'leyikanmış olmak" 'to be washed with Zemzem' is related to Islam directly, because "Zemzem" is a name of the water source in the Saudi Arabia, considered as saint from the very moment of creation of Islam. During ages people have been believing that drinking this water or washing with it during a pilgrimage to Mekka makes them kept by Allah and thus protected from any disasters. Nowadays this expression is used more figuratively than literally and means 'very lucky person' [despite the tradition to drink the saint water by pilgrims exists even nowadays].

The next idioms in Turkish language are also connected with Islam, in which Allah is the main figure, central character of the religious ideology, who is mostly kind and just, but can punish as well:

Allah korusun 'God forbid'

Allaha emanetol 'God keep you'

Allah ne verdiyse 'Whatever God gave'

Allah aşkına 'For God's sake'

Allah bağışlasın 'Let Allah forgive you'

Allah belanı versin "Let Allah punish you"

Hazreti Nuh'tan kalma 'left since Noah's time', i.e since very old time. Noah is one of the prophets mentioned in Koran.

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Helal süt emmiş literal translation is ‘fed with right milk’. The word *helal* is an Islamic term, meaning something permitted by Sharia (the main Islamic codex after Koran).

Kurana el basmak ‘to swear onKoran’

Peyğamber (Muhammet) aşkı için ‘For the prophet’s sake’

Kerbela’ya dönmek ‘to turn into Kerbela’. Kerbela is a city in İraque, considered holy by Shiah Muslims because İmam Husseyin, a grandson of prophet Muhammet was murdered in the battle near this city. So, this expression means some place, turned into a battlefield.

One more expression, having Islamic traditions as a source is *Medina fukarasıgibi düzülmek* ‘to stand in line as poor people of Medina’. During a pilgrimage to Mekka muslims also visit Medina-the second holy city, birthplace of prophet Muhammed. And at this time beggers of the city come to the holy places to beg handout from the pilgrims. So this expression is used now ironically for mentioning the big crowd of people.

Another expression “*Kurbanlık koyun gibi*” (like a sacrificial sheep) comes from the tradition to sacrifice a sheep during Kurban bayram – one of the most important Muslim holidays. It means somebody resigned to his fate like a sheep during cutting.

Since the holy book of Islam is Kuran, Turkish language could not manage without taking idioms from it as well. So, the expression “*insan eti yemek*” – *هـد لآلا* – comes from Kuran. Literally it means to eat human meat, but figuratively “to gossip”. This idiom first was used in the ayat 12 of the Kuran’s sura 49: “Do not look for shortcomings of each other. Do not discuss anybody behind his back. Would any of you like to eat the dead brother’s meat? This disgusts you. So, be afraid of Allah”. The idiom, which condemns gossipers blends with the whole ayat, expressing sinfulness of gossip and slander.

The another stable expression, taken from Kuran is “*Şehirler annesi*” (Mother of cities). This is a figurative name of Medina –the holy city of İslam.

The idioms “*kıyamet günü*” (the judgement day), “*cehennem azabı*” (infernal tortures) coming from Kuran as well, nowadays are used in the daily speech only with a figurative meaning, despite in the holy book they have the literal one. These expressions are widely used also by Russian speakers, who took them from the Bible. This fact witnesses unity of certain topics of Koran and the Bible, such as the hell, the Last Judgement, etc.

1.1 Idioms coming from the believe into Devil (Şeytan) and his assistants

Certainly not only religion, but also the belief into various evil forces (Devil particularly), which was not less stronger than belief into Allah, played a big role in formation of idioms coming from centuries in Turkish language:

Şeytan görsün yüzünü ‘Let the Devil see your face’

Şeytanın art ayağı ‘back leg of the Devil’, means somebody very sly

Şeytana uymak ‘to be tempted by the Devil’

Şeytana pabucunu ters giydirmek ‘to make the Devil put on his boots inside out’. It means to be very clever, synonym of *Şeytanın art ayağı*.

The deep fear against gins (the mythic creatures mentioned in the Koran) was the origin of the expression *Cinçarpmak* ‘to be stroke by gin’, which was used about the person believed to be attacked by a gin and became sick or crazy as a result.

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But people also were able to rank the evil forces, having clear understanding of which of them is worse or stronger, that is why the expression *Cin başka, şeytanbaşka* ‘Gin differs from Devil’ arose. Now the expression is not used literally meaning only that what is good for one man may be not good for another one.

Also, the following idioms can serve as examples of the belief into good and evil mythical forces and the wish to call them or to be protected against their influence:

Ağzından yel alsın ‘Let a wind take this bad words from your mouth’

Nazardeğmesin ‘Let the bad eye be far away’

Pir aşkına ‘for the sake of Pir- saint person’

İfrit olmak ‘to become ifrit-evil creature, like a gin’.

The expressions, having fairy tales as sources are:

Cadı kazanı gibi kaynamak ‘to boil like a witch’s pot’

Devadımlarıylailerilemek ‘to move forward with giant steps’, in Islamic mythology devs are fantastic giants, usually negative.

1.2. İdioms coming from folk poems

Mentioning Turkish folklore as a source of idioms, we should underline dastans – epic love or heroic poems. Most famous of them are “Leyli and Mecnun”-the poem sourcing from an ancient Arabic legend and “AsliveKerem”- both are about unhappy love of young people, departed by their parents. For example, the expression *Mecnunve Leyla misali* ‘like Mecnun and Leyla’ is used for the persons, deeply in love with each other. *Keremgibiyannmak* ‘burn like Kerem’ means the man badly suffering for his love [at the end of the poem Kerem really burns]. Also, *Mecnungibigezmek* ‘to walk like Mecnun’ is about a person, idling about, since Mecnun – a hero of the love poem – lost his mind and run to live in a desert after being departed from his beloved Leyla.

1.3 Use of idioms in Turkish poetry and novels

The idioms, coming from religion, have been widely used in *mani*-short quatrains, representing genre of folklore:

Aya bak, yıldıza bak *Maşrapanın kalayı*

Suya giden kıza bak *Kızlar çeker halayı*

Kız, Allah ı seversinAllah için, söyleyin,

Çevir yüzün, bize bak. *Var mı aşkın kolayı.*

Ocak başında pirim,

Uçları dilim dilim

Büyüğünü everdik

Küçüğüne Allah kerim.

Use of religious idioms in folklore-oral poetry, created by simple people, who could not even read or write, proves the fact they also were created by people. Sometimes religious idioms appear as a part of proverbs:

1. *Allah bilir, ammakul da sezer* ‘God knows, but slave feels’.

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2. *Alın yazısı değişmez* ‘Nobody can change his destiny’.
3. *Tanrıkulumunyardımcısıdır* ‘God always helps his slaves’.

Later we can see such idioms in written Turkish literature, in the novels of famous writers, as well:

1. “*Şeytana külahı ters giydirir, Sivas kurnazı ki, perende atılmaz önünde*”. (Kemal Tahir. Kurt kanunu-55). The idiom means ‘very sly person’.
2. “*ŞeytangörsünyüzünüpisÇolağ`ınDoktorBey*”. (T.Bugra. KüçükAğa). The idiom means somebody unwanted.
3. “*Şeytan kulağına kurşun, evli olduğu Gerhid`den çok fazla memnun*”.(M.Çınarlı. Sanatçı dostlarıım). The idiom expresses a desire to be protected from bad eye.
4. “*Ayol...seni Allah`ıma emanet ediyorum*”. (H.E.Adıvar, Vurun Kahpeye). The idiom translated as ‘God keep you’.
5. “*...binasıyanındakıköşebaşındaNuh`uNebizamanındankalmışbiryazımakinasıkoymuş ...*”. (R.H.Karay. BugününSaraylısı). The idiom means something very old. The name *Nebi* is a Muslim version of Noah.
6. “*O yılın yazında...içerisiKerbelayadönmüştü*”. (A.Veli. MapusaneÇeşmesi). The idiom means some waterless place.

The above-mentioned examples support the words of HilmiAdiguzel (1990:14) “...sanatçılarımız dilimizi zenginleştiren ustalardır. Onlarla beraber olmak dili en güzel kullanma alışkanlığı kazandırıyor”. (Our writers are masters who enrich the language. Being together with them enable us to use the language in the best way).

There also a few idioms from the ancient Greek mythology in Turkish language: *Demokles kılıcı* ‘The sword of Damokles’ means some permanent danger. But such idioms in Turkish are much less than in Russian, because the influence of the Greek culture and language upon Russian one was historically stronger.

2. Orthodox religion and Bible as sources of religious idioms in Russian

Let us now review the sources of idioms in Russian – the language non-relative to Turkish, but having a long history of mutual penetration with it as a result of geographical neighbouring, and the centuries-old peaceful and hostile contacts.

After baptizing of Russia in IX century, Christian religion influenced Russian language like Muslim religion did Turkish one. The following idioms are bright examples of this influence:

- Христа ради* ‘for Christ`s sake’
осенясь крестом ‘crossing myself’
нести свой крест ‘to bear own cross’
ангел во плоти ‘live angel’.

Also there are a lot of idioms sourcing from Bible in Russian:

- козел отпущения* ‘scapegoat’
Иудин поцелуй ‘the kiss of Judas’
земля обетованная ‘the Promised Land’

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фиговый лист 'fig-leaf'

блудный сын 'prodigal son'.

The idiom “*валамова ослица*» (Valaam's donkey) means nowadays a “submissive man, who suddenly protested something” because of the Bible legend about the donkey, which spoke with a human voice in response to beating by its owner Valaam.

Availability of idioms mentioning the country Egypt is another interesting fact, related to the Bible. Because in this holy book a lot of events happen in the named country. For example: *египетский труд* 'very hard labour' *египетская тьма* 'the Egyptian darkness', *египетские казни* 'the Egyptian executions', describing God's punishments for the Egyptian people. All above-mentioned idioms are related to the escape of Jews from the Egyptian slavery.

From the Genesis (part of Bible) Russian people managed to learn the history of Josef – the wonderful young man. Sold by his own brothers for thirty silver coins. Josef became a slave to the rich Egyptian nobleman Potifar, whose wife was soliciting the handsome youth. Then Josef rejected the woman, she slandered him, but Josef proved his innocence. This story is reflected only in two idioms of Russian language: the chaste Joseph and *to sell for thirty silver coins*. The second idiom means to sell something or betray somebody for very cheap price. The first idiom means the man, whose faith does not allow him to do something bad.

2.1 Russian idioms with pagan origin

Before baptizing the ancient Slavs were worshipping nature forces. The idiom «*после дождичка в четверг*» (after rain in Thursday) comes from the belief into Perun – a god of thunder. In the eastern Slav's mythology Thursday was this god's day, and in Thursday people were expecting rain after a drought. But since very often the expectation was not justified, such sad expression, ironically meaning “never” arose. The idiom “*убить бобра*» (to kill a beaver) is a reduction of the proverb “убить бобра – не видать добра” (to kill a beaver brings nothing good) is also related to the Slavic pagan belief, according to which killing beavers is a bad omen. For example, in Polesye region of Belorussia no family member of the person who had killed a beaver was not allowed to build his house close to the place of this crime.

Origin of the idiom “*забить осиновый кол*” (to drive in the aspen stake) is an old pagan tradition, followed even after baptizing: to drive the aspen stake into a werewolf's grave, to prevent his raising from the dead. Nowadays it means to end something.

Another idiom, having pagan origin is «*выносить сор из избы*» (to remove rubbish from a hut). Ancient Slavs believed that somebody can be harmed by affecting his small parts which exist in the hut's rubbish. So, for preventing use of rubbish for putting evil eye they were burning it on the threshold instead of sweeping out.

2.2. Use of idioms in Russian folk songs and written literature

In Russian language (as in Turkish one) religious sayings also can be a part of proverbs:

1. *Божий дар, да попал в худой жар*. The idiom's translation is 'God's gift'.
2. *Бог весть, что нам есть*. The saying's meaning is 'God knows'.
3. *Милостив Бог, я по его милости не убог*. The idiom means 'God is kind'.
4. *Все в мире творится не нашим умом, а Божьим судом*. The idiom means “God's justice”.

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Sometimes we can see idioms in *chastushki* (folklore poetic genre, some equivalent of Turkish *mani*):

Ох, ох, не дай Бог (Save God)

С рабочими знаться

Руки в дегте, сам в вару,

Лезет целоваться.

Russian poets and writers (Pushkin, Chekhov, Tolstoy, etc.) also widely used idioms in poems and novels, enriching their stylistics:

1. «...наступишь на зайчонка, который поселился в валенке Феликса, или упаси бог, сядешь на ракеты...» (В.Песков. *Шаги по росе*). The idiom means warning against any unwanted action, “God forbid!”.

2. «Решили сделать «козлом отпущения» Власовского, который был смещен и изгнан» (Н.Телешов. Записки писателя). The idiom comes from the Bible, it means scapegoat.

3. «Красота дивная!...В обетованной земле живете!» (Н.Островский. Гроза). The idiom means “the promised land”.

4. «...очень хороший литературный критик, у него есть искра божья» (С.Ковалевская. Письмо А.Ш.Леффер). The idiom is translated as “the God’s spark” it indicates very talented person.

5. «Муки Тантала были ему не по силам». (А.Чехов. Лебединая песня). The idiom is translated ‘the torments of Tantalus’.

6. «Не забывайте, что мы инженеры, соль земли, что нам принадлежит будущее. (Куприн. Молох). The idiom comes from the Bible, it means ‘the salt of the earth’.

The Russian linguist L.V.Sherba said (1966:21): “Привычка вдумываться в язык и его выразительные средства абсолютно необходима, чтобы научиться правильно строить фразы, которые наилучшим образом отражают данную мысль» (The habit to think thoroughly about language and its expressive means is absolutely necessary for learning to compose right phrases which reflect the given idea in the best way).

Conclusion

Resuming all above-mentioned we can say that religious traditions and faiths are one of main sources of national phraseology enrichment, due to close links between religion and language. Language is an expression of mentality, and religion always influences mentality significantly. The religious factor in the life of nations is so important that without knowledge of its peculiarities is difficult to imagine a picture of the development and establishment of a language. The religious world view forms the philosophical and religious and moral consciousness of the ethnic group, its philosophy, defines a national perspective on the world, which is permanently reflected by the main way of expression – words and phrases, including idioms. And undoubtedly figurativeness and use during a long time are the main factors for fixing of phraseological expression with a religious or mythic origin in any language. As the Turkish linguist VejiheHatiboglu mentioned (1972:65): “Bugünkullanılan güzellikler gelecekte deyim olabilirler” (The good words used today can turn into idiom in future). Russian researcher Yelena Dibrova stated (1979:15) the reverse process: “То, что в данный момент представляется лексически и грамматически фиксированным, может видоизмениться с течением времени, или может покинуть язык вообще” (What we consider as

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something fixed lexically and grammatically at the moment, can change its shape in future or even leave the language completely).

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