
ALTAY KEP LE UQAA SÖSTÖR. ALTAYSKIE POSLOVITSY I POGOVORKI [ALTAIAN PROVERBS AND PROVERBIAL SAYINGS]

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ALTAYSKIE POSLOVITSY I POGOVORKI: POËTIKA I PRAGMATIKA ZHANROV. MONOGRAFIYA [ALTAIAN PROVERBS AND PROVERBIAL SAYINGS: THE POETICS AND PRAGMATICS OF GENRES. MONOGRAPH]. COMPILED BY N. R. OYNOTKINOVA, ROSSIYSKAYA AKADEMIYA NAUK, SIBIRSKOE OTDELENIE, INSTITUT FILOLOGII [RUSSIAN ACADEMY OF SCIENCES, SIBERIAN BRANCH, INSTITUTE OF PHILOLOGY]. NOVOSIBIRSK, 2012. 354 PAGES.

In Turkic studies, Altaian proverbs have a special place. The importance of proverbs is confirmed by the fact that Wilhelm Radloff opened the first volume (in two parts) of his monumental collection of Turkic oral poetry ... exactly with Altaian (and Teleut) proverbs. The first volume, published in 1866, is dedicated to “the dialects of the Altai proper: the Altaians and Teleut, the Lebed-Tatars, Shors and Soyon”.¹

Altaian is actually a group of dialects; on the basis of the southern dialect (of the *Altai kizhi*) a standard language has been created, originally called Oirot and since 1948 Altaian (*altayskiy yazyk* in Russian).² Nadezhda Oynotkinova is a specialist for Altaian folk poetry. In the important *Index of Typical Passages of the Heroic Epic of the Peoples of Siberia (Altaians, Buryats, Tuvinians, Khakas, Shors, Yakuts)*,

edited by Ye. N. Kuz'mina and published in 2005,^{††} Nadezhda Oynotkinova (then still under her maiden name Baydzhanova) compiled the part on the Altaian heroic epic.³ In 2010 she edited and translated (into Russian) a collection of Altaian proverbs and proverbial sayings. This book comprises ca. 1400 proverbs, collected from published books, archival material and observations gathered on fieldtrips between 2004 and 2006 from ca. 60 informants. As is usual in collections of this kind, the proverbs are arranged according to thematic principles: man—old and young, man—strong and weak, man—cleverness, life and death, time etc. As might be expected with a genre like the proverb, old acquaintances will be found in Altaian garb. One example will have to suffice. Under the heading “man—good and bad” we find: “*Kizhige oro kasper – / Boyjing tüzhering*” (Don't dig a pit for a man,/ You will fall in yourself). There exist parallels in various languages (in German: *Wer andern eine Grube gräbt, fällt selbst hinein*), among them biblical Hebrew. The corresponding “proverb of Solomon” is in English translation (King James Version): “Whoso diggeth a pit shall fall therein / and he that rolleth a stone, it will return upon him”.⁴ Scholars working on proverbs will find a rich mine of information in Oynotkina's carefully edited collection.

In her monograph Oynotkinova provides a thorough study of Altaian proverbs and proverbial sayings. The book consists of four substantial chapters and various appendices (lists of phraseological units, lexemes, semantic key-words etc.). In the book the previous research on Altaian proverbs and the theoretical orientation of the study (Chapter 1), the formal and poetic characteristics of Altaian proverbs in the context of the proverbial lore of the Siberian Turkic peoples (Chapter 2), the pragmatic and poetic-syntactic features of the Altaian proverbs and proverbial sayings (Chapter 3), and the Altaian world view as represented in the proverbs

^{††} Compare: Dmitry Funk, “Type Scenes in the Heroic Epics of Siberian Peoples,” *Folklore: Electronic Journal of Folklore* 43 (2009): 169–176.
<http://www.folklore.ee/folklore/vol43/b01.pdf>.

(Chapter 4) are discussed. Oynotkina specifies six goals in the introduction: 1) the generic definition of proverbs and proverbial sayings, 2) the discussion of the diachronic and synchronic structure of the proverbs and their place among their Turkic neighbours, 3) the study of their poetics, with reference to different linguistic levels (phonology, syntax, lexicon), 4) the analysis of their pragmatic dimension, 5) the elucidation of Altaian cultural codes, and 6) the reconstruction of the Altaian traditional “world map” as it emerges from the proverbs and proverbial sayings.⁵ The corpus of her study is roughly identical with her previously published collection.

Oynotkinova uses the Russian terms *poslovitsa* (proverb) and *pogovorka* (proverbial saying), which have become established largely through the collection of Russian proverbs and proverbial sayings by V. I. Dal', published in 1862. His distinction of these two forms of proverbial lore are discussed in the first chapter, which surveys the scholarly literature on the subject, with a strong emphasis on Russian scholarship. The two terms (with their Altaian equivalents) are defined at the end of the first chapter as follows:

Proverbs (*kep-söstör*) are poetically organized, generally two-part sayings of a didactic character, in the form of complete sentences, simple or complex. They have literal or figurative meaning, which is mainly expressed with the help of stylistic figures and tropes.

Proverbial sayings (*uqaa söstör*) are unrhymed, generally one-part sayings, which describe various characteristics of natural phenomena or the human condition and have the form of complete simple sentences. They also have literal or figurative meaning, which is expressed with the help of tropes.⁶

In addition to *kep sös* (proverb) and *uqaa sös* (proverbial saying), Oynotkinova also shortly discusses some related terms, phraseological units, called *buzulbas sösqolbu* in Altaian (lit. unbroken word-combinations), aphorisms (*chechen sös*, orator-

words) and epic formulas (*qay chechen sös*, orator-words performed in the *qay*-manner, the throat-singing used in epic performance).⁷

In the following chapters, the focus of Oynotkinova's discussion is not on defining genres and sub-genres of "wise words," but rather on analysing her Altaian material. In the second chapter the Altaian proverbs and proverbial sayings are placed in the context of other Siberian Turkic languages, especially Tuvinian and Yakut. Oynotkinova focuses on rhetorical figures and tropes, such as parallelism, epithets, metonyms and hyperboles, and analyzes their distribution over various lexical fields. The central role that metaphors play in proverbs is duly acknowledged by extensive discussion.⁸ Her analysis is predominantly couched in linguistic terms and aims at linguistic precision, without neglecting, however, the semantic implications, and hence the cognitive and cultural meaning of proverbial lore in Altaian. The third chapter deepens the analysis by considering the pragmatic and poetico-syntactic characteristics of Oynotkinova's corpus. She develops an analytic model⁹ that is based on linguistic distinctions between different modalities (verbal moods) and their corresponding discourse genres. Nine discourse genres (resembling the illocutionary acts of speech-act theory) are posited: statement, blame, praise, prohibition, recommendation, wish, order, warning, obligation; they are uttered in a particular verbal mood, such as indicative, imperative, optative, conditional or with the help of modal predicates like *kerek*, "it is necessary." This classification is both exemplified and further refined, especially by focusing on the syntactic structure of the proverbial corpus.

The fourth chapter (entitled *Altayskaya paremicheskaya kartina mira*) returns to cultural meaning. Oynotkinova presents a sketch of the Altaian world view as reflected in Altaian proverbs and proverbial sayings by charting the proverbial material according to semantic areas, which are divided into two "macro-concepts", i.e. *kizhi* (human being) and *neme* (object). Eighty-one percent of the corpus belong

to the macro-concept *kizhi*, nineteen to *neme*. Both concepts are subdivided and the various aspects of their semantic and cultural ramification are discussed. The social relationships of *kizhi* consist of a number of concepts under which the proverbs and proverbial phrases can be subsumed: *albatī* (people), *bala-ene-ada* (child–parents), *törööndör* (relatives), *töröl jer* (place of birth), *nökör* (friend) etc. Further divisions of *kizhi* are economic relationships, speech, the spiritual world of man, life, the intellectual world of man, the emotional world of man. As *neme* is far less frequently represented as a key concept in the corpus, there are fewer subdivisions. With this “map,” Oynotkinova establishes a semantic and conceptual grid that allows her to sketch a differentiated picture of the proverbs and proverbial phrases of the Altaians. This grid is also used in her edition of Altaian *kep söstör* and *uqaa söstör*.

The strength of Oynotkinova’s carefully researched study lies no doubt in the syntactic-rhetorical and semantic-conceptual taxonomies presented, but also in the ample quotations from Altaian proverbial lore. The reader becomes in this way well acquainted with Altaian proverbs and is guided by the analysis to fit them into the broader context of cultural semantics. Oynotkinova has made good use of relevant studies in other languages than Russian. Familiar paremological literature like the works of Archie Taylor or articles by Alan Dundes, Roger Abrahams, Wolfgang Mieder and others are quoted. On the whole, however, the book reflects paremological research in Russian. This is, of course, no weakness. In this way, the reader is made familiar with a rich scholarly tradition that has only fragmentarily been taken note of in non-Russian research. Oynotkinova’s study (together with her edition of Altaian proverbs) is a valuable addition to our knowledge of this corner of the Turkic-speaking world. It is perhaps fitting to close with an Altaian proverb (illustrating alliteration, parallelism, and rhyme):

*Key söstö kemjü joq,
Kep söstö tögün joq.*

“In an empty word, there is no limitation, in a proverb there is no lie.”¹⁰

Karl Reichl

(Professor Emeritus, University of Bonn, Germany).

1. *Proben der Volkslitteratur der türkischen Stämme Süd-Sibiriens. I.*, collected by W. Radloff. St. Petersburg, 1866 (text volume and translation volume).

2. See Omeljan Pritsak, „Das Altaitürkische,“ in *Philologiae Turcicae Fundamenta*, vol. 1, ed. J. Deny et al. (Wiesbaden, 1959): 568–598.

3. *Ukazatel' tipicheskikh mest geroicheskogo èposa narodov Sibiri (Altaitsev, Buryat, Tuvinsev, Khakasov, Shortsev, Yakutov). Èksperimental'noe izdanie* (Novosibirsk, 2005); the Altaian section is found on pp. 11–259.

4. Prov. 26:27.

5. N. R. Oynotkinova, *Altayksie poslovitsy i pogovorki: Poëtika i pragmatika zhanrov* [Altaian proverbs and proverbial sayings: the poetics and pragmatics of genres] (Novosibirsk: Rossiskaya Akademiya Nauk, Siberskoe Otdelenie, Institut Filologi [Russian Academy of Sciences, Siberian Branch, Institute of Philology], 2012), 12.

6. *Ibid.*, 67–68.

7. *Ibid.*, 60.

8. *Ibid.*, 85–108.

9. *Ibid.*, summarized in a table on page 140.

10. From Oynotkinova's edition, p. 98; the contrast *chün-tögün* (truth–lie) with reference to *sös* (word) is discussed in the monograph on pp. 239–240.