
PAREMIOLOGICAL SOURCES OF THE RELIGIOUS CULTURE OF YELLOW UIGHURS IN THE PROCESS OF ASSIMILATION

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Abstract

Proverbs and sayings in a language system are one of the extensive source of information that characterizes the essence of an ethnic group and the system of its spiritual and cultural values. The use of the Western Saryg (Yellow) Uighur language has narrowed in scope because of historical, social, cultural and linguistic factors. A distinct phenomenon in the system of Turkic languages, the 'pure Turkic layer', characterizes the original nature of the Western Saryg (Yellow) Uighur language, which has absorbed the results of an intensive assimilation process. A small number of proverbs and sayings preserved in the Western Saryg (Yellow) Uighur language during the assimilation process, along with features of the ethnic group's worldview, contribute to the analysis of the facets of the common Turkic worldview, understanding common Turkic religious culture, clarifying the essence of common Turkic spiritual and cultural values and identifying distinctions in the development of the paremiological system of Turkic languages in general. The proverbs and sayings of the Western Saryg (Yellow) Uighur language have not previously been the focus of research, making this research paper relevant. The paper considers the content of proverbs and sayings about Tengrism in the Western Saryg (Yellow) Uighur language in the context of the spiritual and cultural values. The historical basis of the comparative study of proverbs and sayings in the Kazakh and Western Saryg (Yellow) Uighur languages is determined by reviewing commentaries on the ethnic history of Uighurs and the place of their language in the Turkic language system. The content of Western Uighur proverbs and sayings, which reflect the Tengri faith, social relations, family and moral values, is analysed. Changes in the situational use of paremiological meaning are determined to be facilitated by the semantic range of dominant lexemes in proverbs.

Keywords: extinction, degradation, meaning, lingua-philosophical, religious

1. Introduction

The Turkic layer is on the verge of extinction in the Saryg (Yellow) Uighur language. This is problematic because this layer is one of the most important linguistic features preserving the unique character of the Oghuz-

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Kipchak language system of the seventh to ninth centuries. The Saryg (Yellow) Uighur, which has the status of endangered languages, does not have a written language, and is spoken only at the family language level among people over middle age [1]. According to the fifth state human census conducted by the committee of nations of the People's Republic of China in 2000, the total number of yellow Uyghurs (yugurs) is 16,719 people [2]. According to representatives of the Sary Uyghur ethnic group, 9,000 Sary Uyghurs live in the Uygu autonomous region, others are settled in other regions of the Gansu region (Iogur Tömer, 52 years old, interviewed during the expedition on the 10th of July in 2012 in Sunan City). During the expedition to the settlement of the Sary Uighurs, we found out that children and young people do not speak the Saryg (Yellow) Uighur language at all, and there are many people who do not speak their native language, even among middle-aged or elderly people. Complex units rich in ethnocultural content in the language are formed by proverbs and sayings. In a language, proverbs and sayings form complex units of ethnolinguistic content. The collection and comprehensive study of proverbs and sayings that inform both the language situation and spiritual culture of a small number of Turkic peoples on the verge of extinction is one of the most pressing issues for Turkology. This characterizes the relevance of this study, which explores proverbs and sayings related to Tengri faith in the Western Saryg (Yellow) Uighur language as a historical source of religious culture.

The objective of the study is to determine the religious culture and the worldview features of a small ethnic group on the verge of extinction through the content of paroemia related to Tengrism. This is achieved by presenting the historical foundations of comparative consideration of Western Uighur and Kazakh proverbs through an analysis of the ethnic history of Uighurs and the position of their language in the system of Turkic languages, determining the meaning and features of the use of proverbs in the Western Saryg (Yellow) Uighur language in the context of the religious culture.

The transition of a single Turkic-speaking population to Turkic, Mongolian, and Tibetan-Chinese linguistics dates back to the time of the Yuan dynasty when the Mongols ruled China. The Mongol dynasty that ruled China in the XIII-XIV centuries was founded by Genghis Khan's grandson Kublai. Although the Saryg (Yellow) Uighurs are settled among other nations in the east of China, they are one concentrated group in the west of the country. It can be said that this situation contributed to the preservation of the Turkic core in the west. The Eastern Saryg (Yellow) Uighur language belongs to the Mongolian language group, whereas the Western Saryg (Yellow) Uighur language belongs to the Turkic language group. Within themselves, Turkic speakers are called *Qara Yogur*, Mongolian speakers are called *Shary Yogur*, and Chinese speakers are called *tat*, completely forgetting their native language. The presence of Sino-Tibetan elements in the Western Saryg (Yellow) Uighur language, as well as in the Eastern Saryg (Yellow) Uighur language, is a lingua-contactological pattern. While the Western Saryg (Yellow) Uighur language fully retains its Turkic core, the Eastern Saryg (Yellow) Uighur language, which belongs to the Mongolian

language group, has a hybrid feature formed as a result of the mixing of Mongolian and Turkic languages. Although the Western and Eastern Saryg (Yellow) Uighur languages belong to two different groups of the Altai language family, there are still signs of related languages between them.

The history and genealogy of the Uighurs in ancient times originated in the territory of modern Mongolia. Their origin is specifically associated with the *Dinlin* (third century BC), *Tele* (fourth century AD), *Joyur/Ujγur* ‘Uighur/Uyghur’, *Qojqu* and *Toquz Oγuz* tribes that inhabited this territory. The history of the formation of their ethnic composition, however, is associated with the history of Turkic-speaking tribes such as *Qarluq*, *Qirqiz/Qirqaz*, *Qijmaq*, *Türgeš*, *Qanlı*, *Najman* and *Kerejt*, as well as the Mongolian, Western Xia and Tibetan ethnic groups that closely interacted with them. According to Reshetov, the Uighurs are descendants of ancient Uyghurs who left the territory of modern Mongolia, moving south and southwest after the fall of the Uyghur Khaganate in the 840s. Influenced by a very close relationship, certain groups of Turpan Uyghurs as well as Kyrgyz, Türgesh, Mongolian, Western Xia and Tibetan peoples were absorbed into their composition [3]. The roots of the ancient Uyghurs, consisting of several ancient Turkic tribes, derive from the Huns. The fact that the Turkic tribes that formed the ancient Uyghur state were descendants of the Huns is evidenced by the fact that they inhabited the same region in different chronological periods: “Along the Selenga River lived the ancestors of both the Huns and later the ancient Uyghurs” [4]. Some researchers believe that *Oγuz* in the annals of ancient China is the ethnonym ‘Oghuz’, written in the form *Oui/Uyu* because of the phonetic features of the Chinese language. Thus, they interconnect the Uighurs and Oghuzs in the ancient Turkic period. According to this perspective, Uighurs are descendants of Oghuz Turks: “the tribes in the ethnic composition of the modern Uighurs were formed based on the tribes in the composition of the Oghuz Turks that inhabited Orkhon in the ancient Turkic period” [5].

Theories on the historical and genealogical as well as the historical and linguistic origin of Uighurs do not always coincide. Therefore, the connection between the Old Uyghur language and the language of the ancient Turks, who left the Orkhon writings, is not considered. The origin of the Western Saryg (Yellow) Uighur language is as follows: in the Hun period of the historical development of Turkic languages (fifth century BC), the *z~š* and *d~t* languages of the Eastern Turkic languages developed from the Uyghur-Oghuz and Kyrgyz–Kipchak groups of languages; in the Middle Turkic period (tenth to fifteenth centuries BC), the *z/s~j* Khakass dialects developed from the *z/s~j* language of the Khakass group and northern dialects of the Altai language; however, the proto-language of Western Uighur was already known in the ancient Turkic period (fifth to tenth centuries BC). According to the traditional classification, the *d~t* language of the Uyghurs (Uighurs), whose ancestors inhabited Orkhon and Selenga, is considered to be separate from that of the Orkhon inscriptions, which has been identified by scientists as the ancient Oghuz language [6]. This indicates that the problems of determining the historical path of development of Turkic languages and the creation of a

historical and genealogical classification have not been fully addressed. Considering the abundance of Kipchak features in the language of the Orkhon inscriptions, the preservation of the features characteristic of the Kipchak languages in the language of the Uighurs formed from ancient Oghuzs is a natural phenomenon. This is the historical basis for a direct comparison between the data of the Saryg (Yellow) Uighur language and the data of the Kazakh language of the modern Kipchak group.

2. Materials and research methods

Data from the works of Malov [7, 8] and the materials of two field expeditions to the Uighur settlement in the Sunan region of the People's Republic of China organized in 2012 (07.2012, 09.2012) under the guidance of the author of the article were used as the material for this research paper. During the expedition, linguistic and ethno-cultural data (video, audio recordings, photos) were collected. Researchers visited Shartala, Kyzyl'davan and other small villagers settled by the Saryg (Yellow) Uighurs in Sunan Yugur Autonomous County in China and collected language materials. As we mentioned above Many Uighurs do not speak their native language and even very few of them know proverbs and sayings. 50 respondents were interviewed and 21 proverbs were recorded and transcribed as they were pronounced by respondents.

It is evident that research on the real life of an ethnic group is only effective when it is conducted in the context of the continuity of 'language and history', 'language and society', 'language and consciousness' and 'language and culture'. Therefore, the paradigm of anthropocentric research, which is based on the connection between the nature of language and the identity of the people who speak the language, is widely used. In the course of the study, the following methods have been applied: comparative-synchronous and comparative-diachronic methods; the traditional descriptive method; the systematization method based on the principles of system relationships and relationships by stages; lingua-philosophical analysis, which includes such methods as the transition from abstract to concrete, generalization, and specialization, characteristic of the theory of gnoseological knowledge; and semantic analysis. These cognitive-logical and semantic approaches allow us to distinguish the content and motif as well as the situational meaning of paroemia. Since the conceptual framework of dominant words in the composition of paroemia is considered the main mechanism for determining a single paremic meaning, the lexical meaning and morphological structure of some keywords may not be clear.

3. Extent of prior research

Proverbs and sayings in the Western Saryg (Yellow) Uighur language in the Turkic language system have not been the focus of research, and the number

of registered proverbs and sayings is small. The first works on the Western Saryg (Yellow) Uighur language of Turkic origin were published by Potanin [9] and Mannerheim [10], and Malov conducted the first study of the Western Saryg (Yellow) Uighur language in the process of assimilation. In 1909-1911 and 1913-1915, Malov led an expedition to China, collecting extensive linguistic data on the Western Saryg (Yellow) Uighur language. The work of this scientist, published in 1957, consists of a short grammatical essay and a dictionary of the Western Saryg (Yellow) Uighur language [7]. The subsequent work published in 1967 is chronological and contains texts in the Western Saryg (Yellow) Uighur language as well as samples of oral literature. In this work, 16 Uighur proverbs and sayings are recorded with a Russian translation [8]. Malov describes the language shift processes concerning the Saryg (Yellow) Uighur language as follows: "The Uighurs found themselves in an environment that was foreign to them language-wise. They were surrounded by people of different languages, mainly the Chinese, the Mongols, and the Tangut people. And each one outnumbered the Uighurs. For thousands of years in this territory, the Uighurs have been steadily losing their language." [7, p. 4]

The next scientist to study the Western Saryg (Yellow) Uighur language was Todaeva. This scientist participated in a scientific expedition to the People's Republic of China in 1954-1957 and conducted research on the Eastern Saryg (Yellow) Uighur language, which belongs to the Mongolian group of languages. Todaeva believes that the Eastern Saryg (Yellow) Uighur language "was originally a Turkic language", writing that two different groups of the Mongolian language, in particular those the Mongols living in the Gansu, Qinghai and Xinjiang regions, and the Monguor, Dongxiangs and Bonan languages closely interacted with the Saryg (Yellow) Uighur language, and, as a result, their elements not only expanded into the Saryg (Yellow) Uighur language but also gradually solidified into its Turkic base and replaced the previous features inherent in the Turkic speech [11]. This way a completely new phonetic and grammatical system was formed. Todaeva specifies the position of the Eastern Saryg (Yellow) Uighur language in the system of Mongolian languages: The Eastern Saryg (Yellow) Uighur language, in terms of its sound composition and grammatical structure, undoubtedly occupies a place in the system of Mongolian languages. The territory of distribution of the Eastern Saryg (Yellow) Uighur language and the linguistic norm corresponding to other Mongolian languages determine its place in the system of Mongolian languages [11].

One of the scientists who made a great contribution to the study of the Western Saryg (Yellow) Uighur language is Tenishev, who participated in an expedition to China in 1958. Travel materials containing data on the Western Saryg (Yellow) Uighur language were published in the form of articles in 1961 [12]. Tenishev conducted an analysis of the phonetic system, grammatical structure, and lexical features of the Western Saryg (Yellow) Uighur language with Todaeva in 1966 [11], and these studies were published in 1976 [13]. The scientist's conclusion on the place of the Western Saryg (Yellow) Uighur language, which belongs to the western part of the lingua-geographic area in the

system of Turkic languages, is as follows: “The Western Saryg (Yellow) Uighur language before VIII-IX C. could have been the *d*-language. Under the influence of the language of ancient Kyrgyzs, it transformed into the *z*- language. In some cases, it was caused by Kipchak’s influence (iotated pronunciation of the first broad vowels, participle and past tense *-yan*)”. [11, p. 40]

Tenishev writes that since the migration of the Uighurs to China (ninth century), their languages have been under the influence of the Chinese language, resulting in the inclusion of a considerable number of Chinese words in the vocabulary, the development of analytic language in the morphology, and formation of strong and weak pairs of hard consonants in the phonology. Outside the Chinese elements, the Western Saryg (Yellow) Uighur language has adopted loan words from Mongolian, Tibetan, and Sanskrit: “thus, the modern Western Saryg (Yellow) Uighur language has been formed as a mixed language and is one of the independent languages in the Turkic language system” [11, p. 40].

The language of the Uighurs, which has preserved many of the original features of the system of Turkic languages, is the most important linguistic structure for determining the directions of development and mutual disintegration of the common Turkic language. The Turkic nature of the Western Saryg (Yellow) Uighur language remains intact according to Malov: “At first, in its static state, one could only marvel at how one part of the Uighurs preserved their language and its many old characters; all of them preserved a good portion of the original in their families, so much so that those who speak any another Turkic language can comprehend it after a very short preliminary introduction” [8, p. 57].

Although the lexical system of the Western Saryg (Yellow) Uighur language has common elements of Sino-Tibetan and Mongolian languages, it has preserved the general Turkic basic vocabulary well. The vocabulary contained in the proverbs and sayings of Saryg (Yellow) Uighurs consists mainly of purely Turkic words. For instance, *Tejir* ‘all-seeing Creator, God’, *jer* ‘earth’, *pas / paš* ‘head, high, above’, *var* ‘exist, have, has’ *var-* ‘go’, *egen* ‘nephew’, *taka* ‘maternal uncle’, *jaymir* ‘rain’, etc. the common Turkic words are also used in other Turkic languages with sound changes. The preservation of the Turkic nature of complex syntactic structures containing a single paremiological meaning characterizes the preservation of traces of the original worldview features and life principles of the people speaking the language. Therefore, proverbs and sayings in the Western Saryg (Yellow) Uighur language can be considered paremiological units that characterize the common Turkic worldview before the formation of modern Turkic peoples. The origin of proverbs and sayings in Turkic languages was considered mainly from a structural perspective until the end of the twentieth century, constituting “a dynamic phenomenon that has been studied, sorted and constantly supplemented over the centuries, the accumulated reserves of folk wisdom, the spiritual heritage that is passed on from parent to child, from generation to generation” [14]. The cultural nature of Turkic proverbs and sayings, have been studied by scientists such as Ibragimov [15], Kaidar [16], Karasayev [17], Kenesbayev

[18], Kopylenko [19], and Tarlanov [20]. One of the first researchers to consider Turkic (Kazakh) proverbs and sayings in a series of common stable phrases, as well as to distinguish both the common features of their phraseology and what makes them unique, was the academician Kenesbayev [18, p. 594].

These studies conclude that paroemia has a figurative meaning in proverbs and sayings; lexemes and phrases that have a literal meaning when considered separately gain a symbolic one when they constitute a proverb or saying; proverbs and sayings possess the ability to express emotional, expressive, and evaluative connotations; and the constant presence of proverbs and sayings in speech determines their special features [21]. In modern linguistics, there is a tradition of considering proverbs and sayings separately from phraseology: “proverbs and sayings, like winged words, are an integral part of the lexical and phraseological system of the language, not a fragment but a small independent literary text, so they are not phraseological units” [19]. Currently, Turkic proverbs and sayings are being comprehensively studied (e.g. Hairullina [22], Kalybayeva [23], Karsybekova [24] and Turabayeva [25]). Proverbs and sayings in the Western Saryg (Yellow) Uighur language have not been studied either structurally or anthropologically.

4. Analysis

The desire of humanity to know itself, the environment and the world provides considerable practical knowledge that determines the spiritual values inherent in a community. The uniqueness of a people’s attitude to the world is characterized by the fact that they evaluate themselves and other people, objects, phenomena and processes in the surrounding world from the perspective of kindness, fairness, beauty and utility, considering them through their values [26]. From the content of a few proverbs and sayings in the Western Saryg (Yellow) Uighur language, traces can be identified of the indigenous spiritual, cultural values and religious culture of the Saryg (Yellow) Uighur people, a Turkic ethnic group that is on the verge of extinction.

The content of religion, which is recognized as an ideological mechanism that forms a community of people, organizes common interests and regulates relations, consists in recognizing socially significant basic values as sacred. The role of religion in culture can be defined as the system-forming factor of each culture. As far as it is known, religious values take their root from mythological beliefs. This indicates that one of the branches of expression of religious values in the content of Proverbs and sayings of Turkic peoples, adherents of the Islam, is ‘Tengrism’. The concept of Tengri, passed down from generation to generation, continues existing from “the religious and mythological worldview of the Huns who lived in the last hundred years BC, the Turkic-Mongol tribes that inhabited Central Asia in the first centuries BC” [4, p. 49], then the Late Middle Ages to modern Turks whose religious values have changed. S.G. Klyashtorny explains the ancient beliefs of the Turks through the functional image of Tengri: “Tengri rules both the Universe and the fate of man: joy and sorrow inherent in the fate of mankind are sent from Tengri; he gives power,

wisdom to the chagans (Kagan) and chagans to people; punishes those who object to the chagans; he directs state and military affairs by giving orders to the chagans” [27]. The concept of Tengri in the knowledge of the Turkic peoples is distinguished by its stability, mystery and omnipotence. Ethnographer A. Seidimbek states that Tengri is a mysterious phenomenon for the Turks: “On the basis of actual postulates of Tengri beliefs, the idea of communication with nature is established. Tengri in the perception of nomads... (is) the object of eternal knowledge and, at the same, time the infinite Cosmos.” [28]

In the language of the Saryg (Yellow) Uyghurs, several proverbs and sayings have been preserved, which are based on the idea of Tengriism of the indigenous Turks: *Teñir varta - joyir var-dro* “When there is God - there will be Uighurs” (Hsermen Yaglakar, 42 years old, Shartala Village, interviewed during the expedition on the 10th of July 2012). Paremia is mainly used in the literal sense of the word, for the purpose of encouraging people, when they have difficulties. The proverb describes the belief that ‘Tengri will always protect the Turks he created’, that is, the mighty of Tengri, established in the general Turkic worldview. The literal meaning of the paremia *Taydir - Täñirdiñ isi* (‘Destiny is Tengri’s will’) in the Kazakh language determines the power of God, that everything in a person’s life is given by God, the figurative semantics - the ability to overcome any difficulties, hope for the best in future. The main interest is to promote calmness and tolerance. In Kazakh, *Žirtiq üjdiñ Täñirisi bar* (‘beggarly hovel has its Tengri’), which symbolizes the power of the Creator, His care for his servants; *Žalyzdiñ žari -Täñiri* (‘lonely person’s protector is Tengri’); *Tän žannññ, žan Täñirdiñ amanatı* (‘Body is soul’s gift, soul is God’s gift’), etc. proverbs are used. The syntactic construction of Proverbs and sayings in the Saryg (Yellow) Uyghur language also coincides with the syntactic structure of Proverbs and sayings in other Turkic languages. For example, the syntactic construction of *Teñir varta - joyir var-dro* (‘when there is God, there will be Uighurs’) is similar to paremias *Täñiri bardıñ - qazınası bar* (‘those who have God, they have treasure’) in Kazakh; *Täñir bar da - asim bar* (‘when there is God, there is food’) in Karakalpak; *Kudaj bar - čep bar* (‘those who have God, they have fortress (defence)’) in Kyrgyz.

Today, the Uighurs, whose ethnic culture, language and religion have undergone major changes adhere to the Buddhist religion. According to historical and social changes and cultural contact processes, the epicentre of worship for the Saryg (Yellow) Uighurs, who converted from the original Tengri belief to Buddhism, is the Taer temple in Qinghai or Lhasa. In each house, there are special places of worship for statues of the Buddha (*Pırqan* in the Western Saryg (Yellow) Uighur language). The place of worship has two sub-doors made of wood, blue on the left and white on the right (*Katak* in the Western Saryg (Yellow) Uighur language). There are also elements of Buddhism in the greeting tradition among Saryg (Yellow) Uighurs. Elderly people who firmly adhere to the religion and people who visit the temple greet with their palms up and their hands outstretched. This is the influence of the Tibetan greeting tradition, in which both hands are stretched out to express that ‘I have no weapon in my

hand, no poison, and my intentions are pure'. Although the traditions and everyday rituals are adapted according to the principles of the Buddhist religion, Buddhism has not been able to erase the original Uighur belief system, the Tengri faith, from the ethnic consciousness. This is evidenced by the fact that in the daily life of the Uighurs there are elements of the Tengri faith, such as the worship of mountains, rivers and lakes, the spilling of milk and other dairy products in honour of the Heavenly Father, praying to Tengri with a cord around their neck, and purifying objects with fire.

In the Western Saryg (Yellow) Uighur language, there is a proverb based on the idea of Tengri from indigenous Turks: *Pasta tejir pezik-dro, altirinda-jerte taka pezik-dro*, "up in the sky (head), great (high) is the Tengri, on Earth below, great (high) are the maternal relatives" (Hsermen İağlaqar, 42 years old, recorded in the Shartala village during the expedition on the 10th of July 2012). This means that no one in Heaven is more powerful than the Lord, and there is no one on Earth more precious than maternal relatives; therefore, it is important to believe in the power of the Lord and honour one's relatives. The single paremiological meaning has two different situational uses following the literal meaning of the components contained in the proverb: 1) to marvel at the power of the Lord in relation to an unexpected joyful situation or a situation of accidental suffering; 2) to express satisfaction with seeing the care of maternal relatives when asking them for help or when the relative is offended and disappointed. In the works of Malov, the proverb is written as follows: *Pašta tejir pezik pi-dro, altirinda-jerte taqa pezik pi-dro, egenijulupse poyiš mi-dro* "What is greater than Heaven, what is more important than your uncle? Can I kill the nephew then?" [8] The interpretation has a three-component structure and the sentences are in an interrogative form. The researcher notes that the proverb was documented in December 1910 from a man named Asyrma-vanda. Fortunately, the proverb has been preserved for more than a hundred years, as among modern Uighurs it is very difficult to find a person who knows this Western Uighur proverb. We believe that the general form of the proverb has not changed. It seems that Malov documented the situational use of the proverb in complete sentences, which is likely to refer to a situation in which the uncle insulted the nephew or caused his death. The third component reflects the form of the speaker's use of the proverb in relation to the situation. The scientist translates the lexeme *tejir*, according to the tradition established in Russian and Western Turkology, as 'Sky, Blue'. We have heard from the locals that 'Tengri' and 'God' are the same concept; hence, the meaning of the phrase *Pašta tejir* is not 'Heaven above' but 'Creator above'. The phonetical changes in proverbs such as $as\check{s} \approx s$ (*pasta \approx pašta*), $q \approx k$ (*taka \approx taqa*) are common in the Western Saryg (Yellow) Uighur language. This is because this language has a very small scope of application; thus, the literary language norm has not been formed, and phonetic variants are used in colloquial speech. Therefore, variants are formed depending on the different pronunciations of words in the composition of proverbs and sayings. In the composition of the proverb, which describes the omnipotence and greatness of the Lord, the sole Creator, the root of the lexeme *pašta/pasta*, 'the head, above, in Heaven', which means 'the head of a human or

an animal', is the phonetic variant of the word (Anlaut $p \approx b$, Auslaut $\check{s} \approx s$), and its figurative meaning is 'the upper or front side of an object'.

The lexeme *pezik*, 'high, great, big', is the phonetic variant of the word *bijik*, 'vertical length' (Anlaut $p \approx b$, Inlaut $I \approx E$, $z \approx j$), and its figurative meaning is 'great, smart, wise, honourable, powerful'. The second component of the proverb contains the lexeme *taqa* \approx *taka*, which describes the position of the maternal relative in the Turkic worldview and the relationship between the uncle and nephew in the expanded scope of situational use. The meaning of *nagashi*, *nagashi aga* in Turkic languages is conveyed by lexemes such as *taqa* \approx *taka* \approx *taya* \approx *taji/taj* \approx *daji/daj*. Among the Kazakhs in the south, the equivalent of $q/k \approx \gamma$ results in the word form *taya*. This concept also has a special significance in the worldview of the Kazakh people: 'The best house is of wood; the best man is from the maternal side'.

As is evident from the content of the proverb *Tenir varta - jaymir joq polmas tro*, "where there is Tengri, there is rain" (Hsermen İağlaqar, 42 years old, Shartala village, interviewed during the expedition on the 10th of July 2012), some elements of the Tengri worldview and shamanism are preserved in the historical consciousness of Uighurs and continue in a syncretic form. The meaning of the proverb is that rain is a gift from God to the people, and whether or not it rains, it is the will of God; it will rain if you pray for it. This proverb is used: 1) to thank the Lord when it rains, 2) ask the Lord for rain in case of drought and 3) figuratively, to receive or ask for help from people in power or the wealthy. Among Uighurs, there was a tradition of sacrifice to Tengri Kagan (*Qan Tenir/Qan Denir*) to ensure the well-being and security of the people. After slaughtering sheep and eating meat, the ritual of throwing the bones onto the steppe and praying for God's mercy was performed on the banks of rivers and lakes during the first days of May. This coincides with the tradition of visiting graves and honouring the memory of the dead. Uighurs have a very specific form of ritualistic sacrifice to summon rain. During an expedition to Central China in 1883-1886 on behalf of the Imperial Russian Geographical Society, Potanin visited the territory of Gansu province and the region from Ordos to Tibet to collect information about the Uighurs and described the following: "Yeguru jadalana, i.e. perform the ritual summoning rain. To do this, they form a ball of potions, bring water from the spring into the house in a bucket, put the ball into the bucket and read 'nom' (sacred books), when it rains, the water is taken away and poured into the same spring from which it was taken" [9, p. 482].

In years of drought, the ritual of praying to Tengri for rain and paying respect to the dead has been preserved to this day in the life of Uighurs. There are Kazakh proverbs containing prayers and wishes to Tengri for the people's well-being and to fulfil their needs: *Aqsarbas şalynsa, tilekti Täñir qabyldar* ('Those who make a sacrifice to Tengri get blessings (it is a religious act of offering an animal to God)'); *Täñir degen tek qalmas, Qūdai degen qūr qalmas* ('Those who pray for Tengri are never left alone, Those who pray for God always get whatever they want'); *Täñiri jerge beredi, jerge berse elge beredi*,

elge berse erge beredi ('If Tengri blesses the land, people are blessed, If Tengri blesses people, a man is blessed too'). This indicates that traces and remnants of the all-Turkic idea of Tengri are preserved both in the consciousness of Buddhist Uighurs and in the consciousness of Muslim Kazakhs.

5. Results

Spiritual and cultural values, specifically social, moral, aesthetic and political values take their beginnings from religious values. They are intertwined, meaning that the content of one proverb can reflect conceptual ideas that describe several values in parallel. For example, the situational use of the proverb *Pezik kisesi joq - toyinjo joq*, "there is no tomorrow when there is no senior (the wise, the elderly, the chief)" (Hsermen İağlaqar, 42 years old, Shartala village, interviewed during the expedition on the 10th of July 2012), is the following: 1) an appreciation for a wealthy well-mannered family with elderly parents at home; 2) referring to people who do not respect their elderly parents; 3) expressing appreciation for the intelligence or honesty of a state, organization, or institution and 4) reflecting the injustice, poor management, or the lack of organizational abilities of the head of the country and other high-ranking officials. The content of this proverb, which is based on the idea of demonstrating respect for parents and elders in the Tengri faith of Turks, promotes social and political values. The equivalents in the Kazakh language are: *Köş başsıysy joq el oñbaidy* ('Country without a leader never prospers'), *Qūralai bastağan kiik oñbaidy* ('A herd of saigas led by a female saiga never succeeds').

Although the stability of the structure of proverbs and sayings, which are linguistically complex, is the main feature, the change in the speech process and communication in accordance with postulates expands the scope of the paremiological meaning. In some cases, each of the two parts has a situational priority. The preservation and perception of information on religious values in the content of proverbs and sayings is a universal phenomenon related to the semiotic nature of language.

Proverbs and sayings describing the common Turkic idea of Tengrism, which form the historical basis of the religious faith of the yellow Uighurs, also determine the historical origin of the religious culture of the people. For example, the content of the paremia *Teñir varta - joyir var-dro* ('While there is Tengri - Uighurs will exist') describes the original manifestation of the belief in the creation of humanity, the truth of the Lord in the worldview of the yellow Uighurs.

6. Conclusions

Proverbs and sayings, which have a rich and meaningful content, develop in accordance with linguistic and evolutionary processes. They change with time and find their place in the modern language but retain the original archaic features of the people's worldview in their informational content. Changes in the

structure of proverbs and sayings cannot radically change the initial paremiological meaning, although the scope of situational meaning can be either expanded or narrowed. Although proverbs and sayings in modern Turkic languages have undergone some structural and semantic changes, the general Turkic worldview is largely preserved in their content. This is also evident in the proverbs and sayings in the Western Saryg (Yellow) Uighur language, which is on the verge of extinction, and the Kazakh language, which has state status.

Paremia, which is passed down from generation to generation, is a complex linguistic structure that determines the unique identity of each ethnic group and its own spiritual and cultural image. It is well known that the proverbial form is characterized by stability, but this is not an absolute concept. This form undergoes various changes depending on the historical development of the language, the influence of neighbouring languages, the laws of internal language development, and the level of formation of language norms. In the Western Saryg (Yellow) Uighur language, where the scope of functional use is narrowed because the language norms are not fully developed and vowel harmony is irregular, words contained in proverbs and sayings are phonetically varied. This indicates that the Western Saryg (Yellow) Uighur language contributed to the formation of variants in its proverbs and sayings.

The distinctive function of proverbs and sayings, which determine the continuity of the content of knowledge and language, in the manifestation of human existence and the existence of an entire ethnic group in relation to it, is associated with the description of spiritual and cultural values in the paremiological meaning. Paremies based on Tengri belief, which form part of a small number of Proverbs and sayings preserved in the yellow Uyghur language, characterize the historical origins of the religious values of the people.

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