

# Basic Conceptual Metaphors in the Context of Chechen Linguopoetics

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**Keywords:** Concept, Metaphor, Image, World Picture, National, Worldview, Poetry, Symbol.

**Abstract:** The article examines the basic ethnomental metaphors and their representation in the poetic works of the classics of Chechen literature: Mahomet Mamakaev, Arbi Mamakaev, Bilal Saidov, Yamlikhan Khasbulatov, Raisa Akhmatova and others. The authors analyze the relationship between the imaginative thinking of an ethnic group, literary tradition and mentally significant abstract concepts, identify key symbols and their meanings, determining their place in the semiotic system of the linguistic worldview of the Chechen nation. The metaphor is viewed from three angles: from the point of view of stylistics – as a figurative means of language, from the position of cognitive linguistics – as a way of thinking, in the representation of literary criticism – as an element of the artistic system of a literary work. The authors also correlate between axiological concepts and the concrete world of "things" - natural facts and cultural artifacts. In the eyepiece of the study are the concepts-symbols "mountain", "tower", "eagle" and others and the corresponding abstract concepts "Homeland", "courage", "freedom".

## 1 INTRODUCTION

In the late XX-early XXI centuries, philological science has increased interest in the study of linguistic and literary categories in the context of national worldview at the intersection of interdisciplinary research. The interrelation of language and thinking in the actively developing direction of cognitivism is considered synergetically with the involvement of data not only from linguistics, but also from psychoanalysis, ethnology, philosophy.

Metaphor, which is studied in literary studies and stylistics as a vivid figurative means, is one of the key concepts of cognitive linguistics.

From the position of cognitivism, a metaphor is a way of thinking in which a phenomenon or object being metaphorized is the domain of the goal, and concepts-lexemes used to describe, comprehend, understand and feel it are referred to the domain of the source. That is, the metaphor is considered in relation to the mental mechanisms of speech generation and perception. Abstract concepts of "love", "honor", "dignity", "death" and others are difficult to understand, so with the help of metaphor they are mastered by comparison or analogy with the concrete. As a rule, specific concepts act as the source

domain, and the goal domains are concepts that are difficult to feel in physical experience. Thus, the metaphor forms a kind of cognitive cultural-thinking model that "defines the picture of the world of a certain linguistic community" (Kiseleva, 2013) and represents a "stereotypical image with which experience is organized" (Pimenova, 2004).

The object of this research is the basic ethnomental metaphors of the Chechen linguistic picture of the world.

The subject is nationally significant metaphors-natural facts, artifacts and anthropomorphs that convey ethno-cultural meanings in the artistic picture of the world of Chechen classical poets.

The relevance of the undertaken research, in our opinion, lies in the description and analysis of concepts-metaphors of the Chechen national picture of the world, establishing links between the mentality of the ethnic group and its imaginative thinking.

The scientific novelty is determined by the fact that the basic concepts-metaphors of the Chechen linguistic picture of the world are considered in the context of the individual author's stylistics of the Chechen classical poets, that is, we operate with the categories of cognitive linguistics and literary studies

to identify the uniqueness of the Chechen ethnic worldview.

The purpose of the research is to identify and analyze key concepts-metaphors based on the material of Chechen classical poetry, to establish links between complex abstract axiological concepts relevant to the Chechen ethnos (goal domains) and the concrete world of "things" (source domains), represented metaphorically in the space of linguopoetics.

In the context of cognitivism, metaphor was studied, first of all, by M. Black, D. Davidson, J. A. Miller, J. Lakoff, in Russian science – by N.D. Arutyunova, V.V. Petrova, T.G. Popova, V.N. Telia et al. As initial theoretical prerequisites, we also proceed from the works of psychologists, cultural scientists, anthropologists who have dealt with the problems of metaphorization, among them both domestic and foreign scientists: L.S. Vygotsky, V.V. Ivanov, A.A. Leontiev, Y.M. Lotman, A.R. Luria, V.N. Toporov, O.M. Freudenberg et al.

In this study, we rely on the idea expressed by Lakoff and Johnson that "a metaphor reflects the qualities and properties of objects that are most significant and culturally conditioned for the society in whose language this metaphor exists" (Kiselyova, 2013).

Metaphor is considered by us as a psychological and speech mechanism that allows the transfer of a name from one subject to another on the basis of common features, by analogy, as one of the leading tropes in artistic stylistics that form a figuratively expressive picture of a literary text and have an aesthetic effect on the reader. The artists of the word are carriers of a certain national and linguistic picture of the world, fragments of which are somehow reflected in their work, therefore, the reproducibility of the image in the works of various authors and genres and its mental fullness, in our opinion, signal the fact that this metaphor is the result of collective ethnomental thinking and enters the national conceptual sphere. After all, the transfer of names is based in this case on "mythologems", "linguistic associative stereotypes", "the pragmatics of the life of a particular people, which determine the axiological nature of the figurative analogy" (Gridina, 2018).

We use the methodology of literary studies, stylistics and cognitive linguistics: structural and semantic analysis of a literary text, establishing a connection between language and thinking, identifying key concepts of the national picture of the world based on poetry, determining logical abstract-figurative correlations between categories of being and categories of consciousness.

## 2 MAIN PART

The ethnic identity of the figurative system of literary and artistic text is determined by various extralinguistic factors: the nature of the native land, material and spiritual culture, historical vicissitudes in the life of the ethnic community, ethical values, traditions, customs (Gachev, 2011). After all, thinking, including national thinking, is mediated by concrete life experience, therefore, the basis of associative connections is, first of all, bodily experience. Therefore, in order to interpret artistic images, the reader must possess a certain set of background knowledge, only in this case he will be able to perceive the text in the plane of the author's national worldview, undistorted. The non-native reader needs to separate his own worldview from the author's, correlated with his national mentality.

Chechen linguoculture, like any other, is a complex semiotic system consisting of numerous mental-figurative codes and based on folklore texts, mythology, religious and household practices, literary and artistic creativity (Kusaev, 2005).

In our opinion, the analysis of the poetic works of Chechen authors shows that they, mostly unconsciously, operate with these figurative signs, including them in the artistic space of their texts. We say "unconsciously" because the repetition of the same image in the texts of different poets testifies to the ethnopsychic nature of this process, the influence of the national picture of the world. Nevertheless, since the master of the word always strives for originality and individualization of the metaphor, being immersed in a new literary context, the common language symbol is filled with additional meanings, gets a brighter sound, while remaining at the same time a specific national-mental marker of the author's artistic consciousness.

The national imaginative thinking of the Highlanders is characterized by "vertical consciousness", or, according to the definition of Z.A. Kuchukova, "the philosophy of the vertical" (Kuchukova, 2005), that is, the geographical location determines the presence of vertical symbols with a positive connotation. First of all, these are mountains, plane trees, eagles, sky, blade, kindjal, towers...

Mountains in the mental representation of Chechens are associated with the idea of spiritual elevation, striving for the ideal, wisdom, because they are directed by their pointed peaks to the sky and rise above all things. They are also a kind of amulet of the ethnos in the literal and figurative senses, since it is the mountains that protect from enemies, as well as protect age-old customs and mores from external

influences, therefore, in the figurative and poetic picture of the world, the symbols accompanying the mountains are the papakha and burka – elements of the national dress of the highlander, his external identifiers.

In the Legend of the Highlanders, Mahomet Mamakaev explains why the mountains have become the key symbol of the Caucasian poets, they embody the Motherland, its past and present, the need to protect the laws of antiquity, formed "at the foot of the mountains – the homes of eagles" by "gray-haired great-grandfathers and grandfathers" and based on "love for the Motherland, conscience, duty and honor" (Dykhaev, 1980). A valuable quality of a highlander is courage, which the future defender is taught from the cradle:

Love for the Motherland,  
Conscience,  
Duty and honor  
Here the sons were inspired from the cradle  
And, before being taught to drink and eat,  
Songs were sung about courage to them.  
(Dykhaev, 1980).

The mother's curse awaits the cowardly, which is also warned by the harsh lullaby: "Let the milk of my breast / Kill you like poison" (Dykhaev, 1980). The poet uses a folklore curse, which is still actively reproduced in the speech of native speakers of the Chechen language, being a phraseological unit. The names of the heroes in the mountains are passed down from generation to generation in legends and tales, not allowing the chain to be interrupted and preserving the continuity of generations:

Among the family of mountains gone into the clouds,

They were passed from mouth to mouth,  
From heart to heart, from centuries to centuries,  
And as the years passed, the legends remained.  
And I am full of the legends of the past days,  
The covenants of a bitter and great life,  
And forever merged in my soul

The concept of the mountains with the concept of the Motherland! (Dykhaev, 1980). Of the geographical objects, another popular symbol in Chechen poetry is the river, and not abstract and typed, but specific rivers flowing in Chechnya – the Terek and Argun. Their violent temper conveys the impetuous, assertive, strong, courageous character of the inhabitants of these places. As it often happens, several symbols-metaphors, epithets, comparisons - are intertwined in one poem, complementing each other. So, in the poem "Terek" by Arbi Mamakaev, these are mountains, a wolf, clouds:

From the mountains high, where the clouds swirl,

You run down, my turbulent Terek,  
I am stunned on the the bank,  
You howl like a wolf when you roll. (Dykhaev, 1980).

Most of the metaphor symbols, including those listed above, are also associated with the enduring value of the national microcosm – freedom. Arbi Mamakaev, dedicating his pathetic lines to the Ossetian classic Kosta Khetagurov, recalls that the mission of Caucasian poets is to glorify freedom, therefore the entire semiotic system of Caucasian lyrics is built around this constant – geographical objects, animalistic metaphors, elements of culture and everyday life – all of them are designed to defend the right of mountaineers to their own way of life and thoughts.

Mountains, gorges, customs, and rivers,  
Rocks, and your villages, my Caucasus,  
Happiness and loyalty to freedom forever –  
All the poets have sung more than once!  
(Dykhaev, 1980).

Noting the superiority of Kosta Khetagurov over all other freedom singers, the Chechen poet compares him to the highest mountain peak:

Like Kazbek among the mountains, with his head  
Above the others was your son, your singer!  
(Dykhaev, 1980).

The continuity of the symbolism of the mountain with the concepts of freedom, honor, courage, inflexibility of character and will is also emphasized by the lines from the poem by A. Mamakayev "In the mountains of Chechnya": "Mother Nature taught them / To be harder than inaccessible mountains. / Freedom is dearer to them. / Shame is most terrible for them." (Dykhaev, 1980).

The wolf and the horse are two important symbols that organize and fill the semantic field of the concept "kyonah" with multidimensional meanings (translated into Russian – dzhigit, although this lexeme is not equivalent to this deep concept) (Ismailov, 2005). In the Chechen view, a kyonah is not just a man, brave and strong, he is, first of all, a noble fellow who sees the meaning of his existence in the defense of the motherland and the pursuit of freedom, he observes the unwritten code of honor of the kyonah, in the Chechen language it corresponds to a non-equivalent unit of speech – kyonahalla – a set of certain norms, rules and ideas that are characteristic for the understanding of the world and the way of life of a worthy man. The core component of this system is the concept of honor.

In the poem "On the grave of his father" A. Mamakaev, using folklore motifs and rehashes, cites several unshakable formulas from this code, which

focus on the concept of honor: "A bitter honest death is better than a dishonorable name", "So that honor does not leave you, be you brave and steadfast", "Let a son not be born if he is not of the brave" (Dykhaev, 1980).

The semantic field of the concept "dzhigit" ("kyonah") is formed using metaphors-symbols "mountain", "wolf", "horse", "eagle", "falcon", "leopard", "lion", "dagger", "papakha", "burka", "will (freedom)"... For example, A. Mamakaev has such metaphors: "In blood and spirit I am close to the mountains..." (Dykhaev, 1980), "And I wander with wolves on a par" (Dykhaev, 1980), "Dzhigit-boy without a horse" (Dykhaev, 1980). Sometimes several animalistic symbols in one context are designed to enhance the impression, as in Akhmat Nazhaev: "Horses rushed forward, proud as lions" (Dykhaev, 1980). Kyonah's vocation is to defend the independence of his people, this is his voluntary choice, he has absolute inner freedom, so even the nature of his native land, the air breathes it: "Days and nights they flew like birds, / Breathing with uncompromising will" (Dykhaev, 1980).

The music of the poudar, a Chechen musical instrument, also embodies the aspiration of the Chechens for freedom. Chechen epic songs of Illi have a powerful influence on listeners, telling about real heroes of Chechen history and calling them by name, allowing to preserve the memory of worthy ancestors.

Bilal Saidov sees the purpose of the poet-singer of his native land in "being an eagle in the heavenly nests" (Dykhaev, 1980), that is, to be free and towering, soaring above the vanity of the world, he calls the mountains "bearded" (Dykhaev, 1980), which once again emphasizes the fact that most authors associate the symbolism of the mountains with the historical past, the guardians of which they act, the wisdom and unshakable fortitude of their ancestors.

The Ingush poet Khamzat Osmiev writes about the continuity of generations, the magical power of his native land, which transmits their freedom-loving spirit from grandfathers to fathers and from fathers to sons in the poem "Night in the Vedeno Mountains", dedicated to the Chechen national hero - Abrek Zelimkhan Kharachoevsky. The mountain in the lyrical lines is personified and appears in the image of an enchanted giant towering over the world. The water of the stream gives it strength, symbolizing the interconnection of all things and the role played by the nature of the native land in the formation of national character and psychology. With the water of the stream, everyone who drinks from it acquires

special powers, because this is "the stream from which Zelimkhan drank" (Dykhaev, 1980). The same motif can be traced in Yamlikhan Khasbulatov's poem "Chakhchar" ("Waterfall"): "Zelimkhan himself, leaving Harachoy <...> drank your waters" (Dykhaev, 1980). In this work, the waterfall acts as a guardian of historical memory, a link between the past and the present, a symbol of power and greatness. Synonymous in its semantics with a waterfall and a mountain is also a wild pear in the poem "Old Pear" by Ya. Khasbulatov, it also personifies the native land, every rustle of its foliage is the focus of memory of the events of bygone years, the legacy and precepts of ancestors, the continuity of generations of kyonahs: "How many past events can live in rustles and creaks", "You didn't break under the storm because you have dzhigits behind you" (Dykhaev, 1980). Eagles, mountains and towers are symbols that are inextricably linked with each other, often interact in one artistic text, enriching its space with various semantic shades that convey the general idea of the greatness of historical ideals and aspirations of an ethnic group. Mountains and towers (their cultural copies) are guardians of generations, keepers of historical memory, Raisa Akhmatova's "mountains do not age/ They are as powerful as the flight of an eagle", "Here the blood of the fathers on the rocks has hardened, and their glory has gained immortality" (Dykhaev, 1980). Despite the fact that, in general, the symbolism of Raisa Akhmatova is saturated with concepts and ideas typical of the Chechen worldview, sometimes the gender factor influences the fact that the images in question are woven into a purely feminine lyrical metaphor, acquiring an uncharacteristic tenderness and purity of sound. This happens due to the use of feminally labeled metaphors, personifications and comparisons in one context, for example: "The sky has dropped the starry shawl", "the beauty of modest Chechnya", "our mountains will bring you hundreds of thousands of legends about love" (Dykhaev, 1980), "The cloud has clung to the chest of the mountain" (Dykhaev, 1980), about woman mountaineer – "she looked at the world like a wounded deer" (Dykhaev, 1980). And yet the vertical symbols in the poetics of Raisa Akhmatova convey, first of all, the strength of the spirit and the unwavering desire to overcome the age-old unfreedoms: "O woman of the mountains! Where did you get the strength / To climb to the mountain peak?" (Dykhaev, 1980). In the poetic picture of the world of Chechen authors, the key concepts-metaphors realize their expressive beginning not only in philosophical pictures of being, but also in simple landscape sketches. It is obvious that this happens

unconsciously, poets think with national metaphors easily and naturally, without even noticing it, because otherwise they would strive for maximum individualization of the image, its uniqueness. We are talking about such expressions as "the papakha of heaven", "the snowy papakha of the mountains", "the wind roamed like a free wolf" (Dykhaev, 1980) and others in which involuntary repetition is traced. They also cannot be attributed to the category of "permanent" epithets or metaphors characteristic of folklore works, since they are not reproduced in a ready-made form, but are used in various variations, organically entering into the figurative system of author's texts along with individual stylistic tropes and figures.

### 3 CONCLUSIONS

We came to the conclusion that metaphor as a way of thinking and an element of the conceptual sphere allows us to explain complex and conceptually significant abstract concepts for the ethnos with the help of clearer and more accessible names of phenomena and objects. Writers, being carriers of a certain linguistic picture of the world, unconsciously include national concepts-metaphors in the artistic system of their works along with means of individual imagery, therefore texts saturated with ethnic signs are able to actively transmit ethnocultural information to the reader. Metaphors-symbols of the linguistic picture of the world of an ethnic group act in this case as peculiar codes of national mentality, which, without having certain background knowledge, can be deciphered, but the representation may be incomplete or distorted.

Despite the fact that basic conceptual metaphors are included in the space of various poetic or prose texts, they cannot be considered as stencil images, since writers use diverse combinations of their creative realization, which is due to the peculiarities of their idiostyle. The semantics of metaphors are expanded and supplemented by the fact that the authors do not use them in isolation, but in semantic combination with other metaphors. The key national metaphor, therefore, is not only a means of expressive and aesthetic impact on the reader, but also constructs mental meanings, since it is based on historical, cultural, natural phenomena.

From the analysis, in our opinion, it follows that Chechen poetry is characterized by the implementation of a stable metaphorical paradigm based on the key elements of the conceptual sphere of language. We have revealed that in the texts under

consideration, the most frequent concepts are significant for the Chechen meta-code: "spiritual elevation", "freedom", "honor", "dignity", "word", "courage", "love for the motherland and readiness to defend it at the cost of life", "death", "continuity of generations", "historical memory", "duty", "wisdom" (from the point of view of cognitive science, they are goal domains), represented by means of metaphor-symbols (source domains): "kindjal", "burka", "papakha", "dzhigit" ("kyonah"), "mountain", "tower", "plane tree", "pear", "eagle", "wolf", "lion", "earth", "horse", "leopard", "falcon", "deer", "fallow deer", "water", "stream", "spring", "waterfall", Terek, Argun, "son", "father", "mother", "handkerchief", "pondar", etc. Thematically and according to the method of explication, they can be designated as metaphors-artifacts, natural facts and anthropomorphs. They are in rather subtle and veiled interweaving of denotative-connotative connections and associations, stringing and layering on each other in the artistic picture of the world of Chechen poetry, which leads to the expansion and deepening of the semantic field of metaphorical transfers, enlarges the idea of the national mentality, contributes to the creation of a multifaceted and multi-focus model of the Chechen worldview.

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