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**The names of material objects in the Mordvin languages:  
comparison of linguistic data with the results  
of ethnographic studies<sup>1</sup>**

The article is devoted to the reconstruction of the Proto-Mordvin names of clothing, some of them reconstructed for Proto-Mordvin with certainty. The national Mordvin costume continues its development and improvement nowadays. There are a large number of the Turkic and Russian borrowings in the Erza and Moksha languages.

Keywords: Mordvin, Erza, Moksha, etymology, vocabulary.

**0. Introduction**

The Mordvin languages (Erza and Moksha) together with Mari belong to the Finno-Volga branch of the Finno-Ugric languages. The Mordvin languages are close to each other although there are some significant differences at the phonetic, morphological, lexical and syntactic levels.

The development of the Mordvins could not be isolated from other nations. There was a constant exchange of material objects. New words were borrowed to Proto-Mordvin along with new items. The reflexes of these words are still preserved in the names of the items. The study of material culture is of great importance when we explore the history, life and environment of a nation.

The national costume of the Mordvins is one of the most important components of their material culture. Therefore, a thorough analysis of the names of its items helps to clarify the available historical data on the history of the Mordvins and the contacts of ancient Mordvins with their neighbors.

The research focuses on the Proto-Mordvin reconstruction of the names of the basic items of the national costume. The main criteria for the selection of the analyzed lexical units were as follows:

the presence of the word at least in two dialects of the Erza and Moksha languages (taking into account possible language contacts in these dialects). Thus, we can assume the presence of the word in Proto-Mordvin;

last derivatives of the Mordvin languages as well as later Russian borrowings (which were borrowed without phonetic changes and denote modern names for clothing) were not taken into account; words of Finno-Ugric etymology, but presented only in one of the modern Mordvin languages were not analyzed.

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<sup>1</sup> The research was conducted in terms of the projects supported by Russian Foundation for Basic Research (grant No.14-06-00271).

### 1. The main part of the national costume of the Mordvins is the shirt

The shirt is the basis of the national costume of the Mordvins. As the most important element of the Erza and Moksha clothing it has social and ritual significance. A variety of the names for the shirt is due to the geographical and pragmatic factors.

E M *panar* 'shirt' (PAASONEN 1994: 1521, ÈRS 454, MRS 458). The etymology of the *panar* is unknown.

E M *panar* and its derivatives can denote different items of clothing, for example: E *ćorań panar*, M *aľań panar* 'men's shirt', E M *avań panar* 'women's shirt', E *ejkakšoń panar* 'children shirt'; E *alga panar* 'the shift of the bride' (PAASONEN 1994: 1522), M *algań panar* 'underwear' (MRS 458), E M *langa panar* 'shirt' (PAASONEN 1994: 1522), E *potpanar* 'undershirt' (ÈRS 505), E *impanar* 'women's embroidered linen clothes' (ÈRS 210).

Also, there is a large number of parts of the shirt in Erza and Moksha, for example: E *panar kopoře*, *panar ku'meře*, *panar ko'meřä* 'the back of the shirt' (PAASONEN 1994: 1522), M *panar algat* 'embroidery on the women's shirt', M (Post.) *panar kukol* 'gusset', M *panar ožat* 'cuffs of sleeves', M *panar rongä* 'part of a shirt without sleeves', M *panar šormat* 'embroidery on the edge of the women's shirt' (MRS 458).

According to the ethnographic studies, the shirt *panar* has a tunic-like cut and length to the ankles (BELICER 1964: 576): „It was cut from two cloths of linen, which were folded across on the shoulders and sewn together by a longitudinal thread. The areas for the head and hands were left unsewn. The shirt had no collar; the triangular form section was made on a chest. The sleeves were straight, with the length to the elbow. The shirt was worn belted, with an overlap”. The embroidery on the shirt was mainly geometrical, it was made with special stitches.

E *pa'ä* ChrE E: Mar Atr VVr Večk Jeg,<sup>2</sup> *pal'ä* E:Ba, *pal'e* ChrM, M *pal'ä* M:P Čemb Sučk MdJurtk 'shirt' (PAASONEN 1994: 1518); E *pa'ä* 'shirt' (ÈRS 453), M *pa'ä* 'shirt' (MRS 458), *pal* Sarat. (BELICER 1973:4)] < FU \**pa'ä* 'festive, precious clothing, shirt' (DEVYATKINA 2014: 69).<sup>3</sup> Khanti *peł* (KazSt) 'clothing etc.' (DEWOS 1154), *peł'ni* (V) 'ancient men's robe which was decorated with reindeer skin' (DEWOS 1164).

It is interesting that the Mordvins of the Volga (the Samara region) and the Saratov region have preserved the name for the shirt (E *pa'ä*, M *pal'ä*) which was used for the nomination of the traditional shirt under the common term

<sup>2</sup> Hereinafter the dialects of the Mordvin languages are presented according to the (PAASONEN 1994: LXXXVII–XCIX).

<sup>3</sup> We are thankful to JULIA NORMANSKAJA for some etymologies which published in this article.

*panar*. It is also noteworthy that the Mordvins of the Saratov region used this nomination along with *panar*. The shift of meaning can be explained by the fact that in this region the embroidery on the shirts was minimal in comparison with the decoration of the shirts of the Mordvins which lived in the territory of traditional residence: the festive shirt *pal'a* reminded of the widely used shirt *panar*.

The frequency of using this term in the Mordvin folklore suggests that it was spread everywhere. The best preservation of archaic elements of the language and national culture in the Volga and Saratov regions may sometimes be determined by the fact that the Mordvins of these regions lived separately.

It must be noted that a special type of a ceremonial upper garment was common among Erza women. This type of the shirts was worn on the day of full age and on the wedding day (MARKIN ET AL. 2004: 308): E Mar Atr VVr Večk Is Jeg Ba *pokaj* 'holiday shirt', Ič *pokaž* 'women's shirt', M Sučk *pokaj* 'holiday shirt' (PAASONEN 1994: 1718) < FU \**puke* 'clothing' (DEVJATKINA 2014: 69): Fin. *pukea* 'to dress' (SSA 2: 419), Khanti *-pāk* (Ni Kaz) 'clothing' (DEWOS 1111). UEW (1: 401–402) and SSA (2: 419) suggest a comparison of the Finnish word with Sami *bōkkat* (In Kld Ko T) 'to drill, drill', Hung. *bújik*, *búvik* 'creep'. However, these comparisons are much less convincing from a semantic point of view.

Also, the name of the Moksha clothing should be noted: M *ščama*, *určamat* (Pl.), *ščam*, *ščam* 'dress'; clothing' (PAASONEN 1994: 1463), M *ščam* 'shirt' (BELICER 1973: 51)<sup>4</sup> < FU \**šame* 'clothing' (DEVJATKINA 2014: 70): Fin. *hame* 'skirt, coat' (SSA 1: 136); Khanti *lōmät* (Mj Trj J), *tumät* (DN DT Ni Š), *tōmät* (Fil KoP Kr), *omät* (Kaz), *lumät* (Sy) 'to dress, to shoe' (DEWOS 762). It had a cut different from the Erza shirt, which may indicate the separate development of the Erza and Moksha national costumes.

It is interesting to note that the nomination of the shirt FU \**šopa* 'clothing, like a shirt' (UEW 1: 486) (Fin. *sopa* 'shirt, dress, clothing', Est. *sōba* 'shawl, tyre', Mansi *šop* (TJ), *sup* (So.) 'shirt' (> Khanti *šūp* 'short shirt') is not preserved in the Mordvin languages.

<sup>4</sup> PAASONEN associates it with *orštams* ChrE, *orštams* ~ *orčams* E:Mar E:Atr Ba E:Večk E:NSurk SŠant Jeg, *oršams* E:Is, *oršamks* E:VVr, *orčams* E:Kažl, *orčams* E:Kal, *určams* E:Nask, M *štšams* ChrM M:P Čemb Sel, *urštams* M:Gor, *určams* M:Sučk Prol, *určams* M:Ur, *uršams* M:MdJurtk 'to dress, to wear' (PAASONEN 1994: 1463).

E *orčamo* E:Mar, \**oršamo* E:SŠant, *or'čat* E:Kal, *orčama* E:Petr, M *ščama* M:P Jožka Kr, *určamat* (Pl.) M:Kul, *ščam* M:Pš, *ščam* M:Čemb Pimb Sp 'dress; clothing' (PAASONEN 1994: 1463) 'shirt' (BELICER 1973: 51).

## 2. Open clothing

It was a distinctive element of the national costume of the Mordvins. This type of clothing was spread throughout the residence of the Erza and Moksha until the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In each area it had its own distinctive features in the way it was cut, decorated, worn, and each type of this element of the national costume had its name. So, in the Gorodiščenskij district of the Penza region it was called *ruća*, in Bol'shoe Seskino vil. Dal'ne-Konstantinovskij district of the Nižnij Novgorod region it was called *šušpan* (Mordvins-Terukhane), in Mordovskij Karataj vil. Tetjuškij district of the Republic of Tatarstan it was called *čiba* (Mordvins-Karataji), in Mordovski Parki vil. Krasnoslobodskij district of the Republic of Mordovia it was called *muškas*. Also, the nominations E *oršamka*, *impanar*, M *paňžat*, *balahon*, etc. were used.

The most common in the dialects of the Mordvin languages is the term E *ruća*, *ruťša* ChrE E:Mar VVr Ba Kad Kal Večk Jeg, *ruća* E:Is, M *ruťše* ChrM, *rućä* M:P M:Alk Sučk M:MdJurtk, *rućä* M:Sel, *rućä* M:Temn 'linen jacket or a women's top shirt'; E:Mar 'the third, the upper shirt of the bride'; ChrM 'headscarf'; E:VVr 'scarf, shawl'; M:P 'headscarf; handkerchief' (PAASONEN 1994: 1903); E *ruća* 'top women's closing' (ĖRS 560). The etymology of E *ruća*, *ruťša*, M *ruťša* is currently unknown.

In the Erza and Moksha dialects there is a large number of compound words, one part of which is E *ruća*, m. *rućä*, also in the meaning of 'shawl'.

The *ruća* was the clothing which was used on special occasions – it was worn on holidays, when going to church, on the wedding day etc. It had a ritual meaning, for example, the girls were dressed in the *ruća* when they cooked for the wedding (EVSEV'EV 1990: 104). The young women's *ruća* was more elegant than that of elderly women.

## 3. Belt clothing

This reconstruction is very important for the history of culture because wearing pants in the 5–4<sup>th</sup> centuries BC is considered an important indicator of the level of civilization. Since pants were made of organic materials, archaeological data in this case cannot be informative.

E *poňks* ChrE E:Mar Kal ChrM M:Alk, *poňst* E:Atr (Pl.) 'leg/pants, trousers' (PAASONEN 1994: 1747), E M *poňkst* 'pants' (ĖRS 499, MRS 514) < PU \**punV* 'pants' (see more about the etymology in (DEVYATKINA 2014: 72)). Compare: PNS \**pəniʒ* (or \**pənz*) 'pants, clothing' (ANIKIN – HELIMSKIJ 2007: 128): NenT (Ter.) *паны*, (L) *panī* (1 Sg. *panēmi*?), nenL (L) *pannī*, En. *fono* 'women's coverall', Ngan. *honiʔə*, *xoniʔə* 'pants' (ANIKIN – HELIMSKIJ 2007: 128).

In the ethnographic literature the most archaic form of *poňkst* is pants with a wide step. Such male pants are common among the Udmurts (BELICER 1951:

91), Mari (WICHMANN 1913: 34). This fact may be an indirect indication of the native origin of this item of clothing. Women's *pojkst* are more common among the Moksha. The *pojkst* consisted of two trouser legs – *pojks píłge* and a medium cloth – *potmaks* (BELICER 1973: 63). The deviations from the traditional cut were insignificant.

#### 4. Headwear

It is an important part of the national costume of the Mordvins. The names of two headdresses can surely be reconstructed to Proto-Mordvin. There is a large number of Turkic and Russian borrowings and its own derivatives in Mordvin (Erza and Moksha languages).

E *paŋgo* 'women's headdress' (ĖRS 454), M *paŋga* 'festive headdress of a married woman' (MRS 459). The word has no etymology, but it should be noted that (CYGANKIN – MOSIN 1977: 71) gives a comparison: < FU, Fin. *panka* 'haft, handle', Est. *paŋg* 'haft, handle'. The same authors in their dictionary (CYGANKIN – MOSIN 2015: 138) make comparisons with the Veps, Sami, Karelian languages and assume the PU etymology.

Also, there are a lot of derivative names of headwear in Erza and Moksha, for example M *kał'am-paŋgəñä* M:P 'mourning cap' (PAASONEN 1994: 1533), E *píče-paŋgo* 'women's headdress (a scarf tied in a special way)', E *svaxań paŋgo* 'matchmaker's headpiece' (BELICER 1973: 213), M *paŋgəñät* 'headdress of a married woman' is the same as E *volosńik* (BELICER 1973: 213).

This type of headwear disappeared from the territory of the modern Republic of Mordovia in 1920s and from some other areas (the Uljanovsk region, the Chuvash Republic) at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (BELICER 1973: 149). It had several varieties in different regions.

Also, one more name for an item of headwear should be noted: E *paťša* ChrE E:Mar HI Kal Večk Jeg, *paťa* ~ *paća* E:Kad, M *paća* M:P Sučk Gor Sel Prol Ur M:MdJurtk 'handkerchief', M:Gor 'head scarf' (PAASONEN 1994: 1493). It is a borrowing from Turkic. It may be associated with tat. *nava* 'rooster comb' < Old-Persian *pacha* (< *pajcha*) (AHMET'JANOV III: 8).

There is a large number of compound words, one part of which is E *paťša*, M *paća*.

#### 5. Three types of the Proto-Mordvin footwear

E *kař* ChrE E:Mar Večk Is Jeg, M *kař* ChrM M:Pš Sel Ur Jurtk 'bast' (PAASONEN 1992: 629, ĖRS: 238, MRS: 104) < FW, ? FU *\*kore* (*\*kōre*) 'shell, bark' (UEW 1: 184), Fin. *kuori*, Est. *koor* 'shell, bark', Komi *kjrs* 'the thickness of bark', Khanti *čärə* (Ko), *čäri* (Kaz) 'reddish layer on the inner side of birch bark'; *čurəp* (DN) 'rind', *čürəp* (Kaz) 'crust (bread, cake), thick piece of

leather', Mansi *χorp* (K), *χurup* (N) 'rind' (UEW 1: 184). There is a large number of compound words in the Mordvin languages, one part of which is E M *kař*.

According to the ethnographic studies, the most common footwear is considered to be lime bast shoes *kař*, which were worn with white canvas footcloth; „leather boots worn only on holidays, and only by rich people” (BELICER 1964: 576).

E *ķeme* ~ *ķem* ChrE E:Mar E:Ba E:Atr VVr Gor Kad Kal Večk Hl Is Jeg, M *ķemē* ChrM, *ķemä* ML, *ķämä* M:P, *ķemä* M:Jurtk 'boot' (PAASONEN 1992: 696) < FP \**kämä* 'boot, shoes' (UEW 2: 650), *gāmā-bmāg-* (N), *kāma* 'boot' (L), Mari *kem* (KB U B) 'boots', Komi *ķem* (S Lu Le), PO *kōm* 'boot', S *ķemal-*, S P *ķema•v-* 'to wear shoes', PO *kō•mal-* 'to shoe, to wear on feet' (UEW 2: 650). A comparison Sami \**kāmek* 'shoes' and E *ķeme*, M *ķemē* 'boot' mentioned in (LEHTIRANTA 1989: 44). We assume a comparison with Ngan. *xyäümy* (KOSTERKINA 2001: 301).

According to the ethnographic studies, boots were known as an old type of footwear. On holidays especially young women and girls wore the boots *ķem* with folds on the leg of the boot (*harmonika*) and tips on the heels. The boots were tied with colored ribbons not to fall off the leg (BELICER 1964: 578).

E *kotat* 'ladies' shoes' (ČETVERGOV 1995: 68), E M *kotat* 'boots, shoes' (BELICER 1973: 214). CYGANKIN – MOSIN (2015: 82) assumes: < FU, Veps *kodat* 'ladies' shoes', Est. *kotad* 'worn shoes'. A comparison with Mari *katá* 'boots, boot', Komi *kot*, Udm. *kut* 'shoes from one piece of leather, boots', Nen. *khuty* 'boot', the connection of these words with Mari is indicated in (ANIKIN 2000: 319). It is also possible to compare these words with the Selk. *kade* 'boot; boots; shoes' (BYKONJA 2005: 34).

The Mordvins used the term *kota*, *kotat* to denote short leather shoes in various styles: shoes decorated with red flannel, yellow and red leather which were worn by Erzya women in former Gorodiščenskij district of the Penza province. The Mordvins-Terukhane used *kotat* to denote boots with rubber bands knitted from colorful wool. The *kotat* were worn by women from wealthy families in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century (BELICER 1973: 173).

## 6. Some names of items of clothing of the Proto-Mordvin national costume

E *kšna* ~ *šna* ChrE, *kšna* E:Mar Atr VVr Ba Večk Bag Kozl NSurk, *ķišna*• E: Šokša, M *šna* ChrM M:P Šučk Ur, *šāna*• M:Jurtk 'belt' (PAASONEN 1992: 909) < FW \**šišna* 'leather thong' (UEW 2: 786) (see more about the etymology in (DEVYATKINA 2014: 74)).

E M *praksta* 'footcloth' (PAASONEN 1994: 1783), the etymology of the E M *praksta* is unknown. The presence of the name in the dialects of Erza and Moksha may indicate the presence of this word in Proto-Mordvin.

E *šep̄e* ~ *žep̄e* E:Mar Atr Gor Večk Is Vez Kozl, *žep̄ä* E:Ba 'pocket', M *čep̄ä* ~ *šep̄ä* M:P, *čep̄ä* M:Pš, *šep̄ä* M:Gor Vod, *žep̄ä* M:Sučk, *žep* M:Temn M:Prol MdJurtk 'pocket' (PAASONEN 1996: 2136) < Turk., cf. Tat. *ḡḡun* 'pocket; wallet'.

E *zapon* E:Petr Beg Sl, *zapun* E:Večk, M *sapoňä* M:P, *sapoň* M:Pš, *zapon* M:Sel 'apron' (PAASONEN 1996: 2679) < Rus. *zapon* 1) 'apron' (DRFD 10: 342).

E *nula* E:Mar Atr Ba NSurk Nask, M *nula* M:P M:Čemb Ur MdJurtk 'rags', 'daiper' (PAASONEN 1994: 1363–1364), M *nula* 'women's dress made of printed cotton or satin, silk' [MRS 421–422] < Rus. *nuly* 'old, worn-out clothes' (Mihaleva 1986: 128).

E *čulka*, *tšulka* ChrE E:Mar Hl Večk, M *tšulka* ChrM, *čulka* M:P 'stocking' (PAASONEN 1990: 191) < Rus. *chulok* 'stocking'.

E *vařga* E:Mar Ba Kad, *vařiga* E:VVr, M *vařaga* M:P Sel Katm 'mitten' (PAASONEN 1996: 2552) < Rus. *vařgi*, Pl. (Sg. *vařga*) 'mittens; woolen gloves' (DRFD 4: 62). VASMER (1986: 274) suggests a link with Rus. *vařag*, borrowed from Old-Scand. \**varingr*, *varingr*, from *vár* 'loyalty, pledge, vow', considering that the original meaning was a 'Varangian glove'.

## 7. Conclusions

So, the Proto-Mordvin complex of clothing had a variety of shirts, and the way of their wearing was preserved until the middle of the XX<sup>th</sup> century. The women's costume was complex and included many elements (six or more shirts could be worn at a time). Another feature of the Proto-Mordvin complex of clothing was open clothing E *ruća*, M *ruš̄e*, which had no analogues in other Finno-Ugric peoples. The nomination of the belt clothing *poňks* should also be mentioned, and it can be reconstructed in Proto-Uralic.

At the Proto-Mordvin level we can securely reconstruct two types of headdresses: E *paňgo* 'women's headdress', M *paňga* 'festive headdress of a married woman' and the early Turkic borrowing E *paťša*, M *paćä* 'handkerchief'. Later, names and forms of headwear were borrowed from Russian which shows close relationships with the Russian population. The Erza and Moksha borrowed more comfortable headdresses from their neighbors and stopped using heavy national headwear.

Names of boots, shoes and bast shoes in Proto-Mordvin along with a great variety of their own derivatives in the dialects of the Mordvin languages demonstrate a fairly high level of development of the Proto-Mordvin footwear complex. Separate borrowings of the names of the boots into the dialects and the emergence of our own derivatives from Russian borrowings are interesting.

Thus, the Mordvin national costume continued its development and improvement. The corpus of the names for material objects in the Erza and Moksha

languages was replenished with new words produced by derivation and composition.

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