

THE CONCEPT

OF "SIN" IN FOLKLORE AND ITS EXPRESSION IN DIFFERENT GENRES

EL CONCEPTO DE «PECADO» EN EL FOLCLORE Y SU EXPRESIÓN EN DIFERENTES GÉNEROSKamala Islamzadeh Faiq¹E-mail: kemale_67@mail.ruORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2343-232X>¹Baku State University, Faculty of Philology, Department of Folklore.**Suggested citation (APA, seventh ed.)**Islamzadeh Faiq, K. (2023). The concept of "sin" in folklore and its expression in different genres. *Universidad y Sociedad*, 15(S2), 120-128.**RESUMEN**

The category of sin occupies a central place in all primitive and world religions, and it has an ethnocultural essence. The concept "Sin" is expressed both in philosophical, journalistic literature, fiction, and in linguistic constructions, and stable phrases used in everyday communication. It occupies a special place in mythological and religious views, so is an integral part of the traditional world picture and this is what determines its description in a number of folklore genres. Taking this into account, the objective of this work is to discuss the forms of expression of the concept of sin in different genres of folklore, analyzing examples of Azerbaijani, Russian, Turkish, Greek, and Jewish folklore sample. For this, in the investigation it is traced the reflection of the concept in the forms of prohibitions, proverbs, sayings, beliefs, legends, stories, epics showing that there is a functional and thematic connection between these genres. For example, this way, small paremic units on this topic are expanded by adding new motives and characters, as well as the repetition of motives is transformed into larger genres. Comparisons reveal similarities, and sometimes even identity between the plots of many texts. The author believes this correspondence happens due to 3 different reasons: firstly, in the same situations, regardless of nationality human thinking works on the basis of the same algorithms (the commonality of basic values among different peoples is also associated with this); secondly, the mutual influence of these peoples during various contacts; and thirdly, the use of the same source (meaning the sacred books sent down from heaven).

Keywords: Folklore, sin and punishment, similar plots, archaic thinking.**RESUMEN**

La categoría de pecado ocupa un lugar central en todas las religiones primitivas y mundiales y tiene una esencia etnocultural. El concepto "Pecado" se expresa tanto en la literatura filosófica, periodística, de ficción, como en construcciones lingüísticas y frases estables utilizadas en la comunicación cotidiana. Ocupa un lugar especial en los puntos de vista mitológicos y religiosos, por lo que es una parte integral de la imagen del mundo tradicional y esto es lo que determina su descripción en una serie de géneros folclóricos. Teniendo esto en cuenta, el objetivo de este trabajo es discutir las formas de expresión del concepto de pecado en diferentes géneros del folclore, analizando ejemplos del folclore azerbaiyano, ruso, turco, griego y judío. Para ello, en la investigación se rastrea el reflejo del concepto en las formas de prohibiciones, refranes, refranes, creencias, leyendas, cuentos, epopeyas demostrando que existe una conexión funcional y temática entre estos géneros. Así, por ejemplo, se amplían pequeñas unidades parémicas sobre este tema añadiendo nuevos motivos y personajes, así como la repetición de motivos se transforma en géneros más amplios. Las comparaciones revelan similitudes y, a veces, incluso identidad entre las tramas de muchos textos. El autor cree que esta correspondencia ocurre debido a 3 razones diferentes: en primer lugar, en las mismas situaciones, independientemente de la nacionalidad, el pensamiento humano funciona sobre la base de los mismos algoritmos (la comunidad de valores básicos entre diferentes pueblos también está asociada con esto); en segundo lugar, la influencia mutua de estos pueblos durante varios contactos; y en tercer lugar, el uso

de la misma fuente (es decir, los libros sagrados enviados desde el cielo).

Palabras clave: Folklore, pecado y castigo, tramas similares, pensamiento arcaico.

INTRODUCTION

The word “folklore” stands for many things – it often marks poetry, sayings, myths, songs, but also dances, music, customs, and festivals. What appears essential is the representational category assigned to each denotation. Yet representation implies interests, which in turn relate to particular epistemologies (Kuutma, 2015). Scientifically, in modern usage folklore is an academic discipline whose subject matter (also called folklore) comprises the total sum of the literature, material culture, and customs of traditionally derived subcultures and transmitted orally or imitatively within predominantly literate and technologically advanced societies; comparable study among totally or largely illiterate societies falls within the disciplines of ethnology and anthropology. However, in popular usage, the term folklore is sometimes restricted to the tradition of oral literature. Folklore studies began in the early 19th century, concentrating almost exclusively on rural peasants, preferably uneducated, and some other groups relatively outside modern forms (for example, the Gypsies). His goal then was to trace the preserved archaic customs and beliefs back to their remote origins in order to trace the mental history of humanity (Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2017).

According to Michalopoulos and Xue (2021), folklorists are interested in collecting stories untouched by modernization, and collectors perceived narratives as having a precise origin in space and time. This idea has been criticized because of the inherent uncertainty in developing convincing estimates, nevertheless, certain types of motifs likely pre-date others. For example, cosmological ones are considered significantly older than other types of motifs.

Unfortunately, at present, the basic universal human values are gradually losing their former significance among the younger generations. In such a situation, the necessary task is to increase attention to spiritual problems. Otherwise, degradation processes in society may be inevitable. Turning to history, we see that regardless of the territory of residence, language, skin color, anthropological type, there are concepts that are common to the cultures of different peoples. These include justice, purity, devotion, truth, faith, fate. The opposite concepts (injustice, ugliness, crime, disbelief, etc.) are perceived both in the mythological and religious worldview through the

category “Sin”. We will not be mistaken if we say that since ancient times, in the composition of ethnic groups, the category “Sin” has occupied a central place in assessing the behavior of individuals, intra-family and intra-social relations.

This concept which is the core of ethnic culture and primitive worldview was approached from different aspects from time to time; and it became the subject of a number of literary works, philosophical treatises, journalistic articles. Ideas related to sin also occupied the minds of ordinary people and were fixed in the language as idioms and expressions in the process of communication. For example, in the everyday life of the Azerbaijani people, the following expressions are often found: *m ni günaha batırma* “lit. do not stain me with sin”; *günah m nd n keçdi* “lit. This is not my sin”; *qulaq günahkariyam* “lit. I am sinful that I heard this”; *günah rik etm k* “lit. partner in sin”, etc. At present, when the direction of efforts in the humanitarian field has become a requirement of the time, the need for scientific clarification and promotion of spiritual values is felt. In particular, the concept of “Sin” becomes relevant in the process of analyzing the fate of an ethnos.

The concept of “Sin” attracts attention with its functionality in many genres of folk art. Its leading role in the model of the world reflected in folklore is obvious. In some studies, in the field of folkloristics, sin is considered in a religious context. However, depending on the goal, research is carried out in other directions, too. So, while in some studies the promotion of spiritual values is in the foreground, in other studies the emphasis is on the specifics of the genre. Plots with the concept of “Sin” cover a fairly wide range. This is manifested in the general consideration of the problem in the context of the folklore of the peoples of the world. For example, texts about the journey of the soul to the next world in an unconscious state, plots related to incitement to an evil deed, lust, stories about punishment for blasphemy, etc.

Taking this into account, the objective of this work is to discuss the forms of expression of the concept of sin in different genres of folklore, analyzing examples of Azerbaijani, Russian, Turkish, Greek, and Jewish folklore sample.

DEVELOPMENT

Sin is a religious concept that is paramount to every religion of the world, and in some way every religion has moral conduct that prohibits and punishes sin. Sin is any lack of conformity, either active or passive to the law of God in act, attitude, or nature. This may be a matter of act or thought. It includes a failure to do what is right. Sin offends people; it is violence and lovelessness toward

other people, and ultimately, rebellion against God. It includes not only individual acts such as stealing or lying or committing murder, but also attitudes that are contrary to the attitudes God requires from man. Therefore, reflections on the above positions show that sin involves the relationship between man and God; the relationship between man and nature; and the relationship among human beings. Thus, sin is a violation of God's moral law that guides the relationships (Olutoye Odeleye, 2020).

According to Lam (2018) in contemporary popular and theological discourse, the term sin is used in at least three distinct semantic senses: to denote an act of wrongdoing, to speak of a state of guilt associated with (or resulting from) such an act, and to refer to sinfulness—that is, a human propensity toward sin. Examples of all three of these senses can be found in the biblical texts, though their expressions take different forms. In addition, notions analogous to sin can be found in religious systems from around the world and throughout history, if we take “sin” to encompass any sense of a deviation from an abstract ideal (Stebbins, 2014).

Related to folklore, considering the category of sin as a complex concept allows us to analyze comprehensively its artistic embodiment. Comparison of samples of different genres makes it possible to reveal simple and complex connections between them. Structural organization of folklore samples, motifs that form plots, artistic images and their comparison at the level of stereotypical language constructions involuntarily evoke associations among researchers. It is necessary to take into account the originality of the poetics of folklore, the criteria for approaching it that are fundamentally different from the poetics of written literature. With multiple performances of folklore samples belonging to different genres in the repertoire of storytellers, it is also possible to combine them. It is necessary to determine on what principles this happens. It is also important to explain by what means the text expands, how the plot becomes more complicated. All this can be achieved by analyzing the plot-compositional structure of the samples. This method of research allows expanding its scope regardless of the variety of genres, worldviews, means of artistic description, value systems and makes it possible to consider the concept “Sin” in the text.

The concept “Sin” can be revealed both in the structure of small folklore genres and in such large samples as a fairy tale and epic. While some of the studied materials are connected with ideas prevailing in everyday life, the other part is of a religious and edifying nature. In other words, the plots are functionally different, and they differ from each other in their reflected values and models of the world.

In ancient cultures dominated by mythological ideas, people regulated their behavior on the basis of the category of sin, and in their attitude towards fellow tribesmen, the environment and other living beings; they were guided precisely by this. The rules of primitive behavior are encoded in formulas called prohibitions. These formulas reflect not only instructions regarding prohibitions in relation to real and abstract beings, but also objects. It is possible to determine in advance what awaits the culprit in case of non-compliance with these instructions. In general, prohibitions are a means of managing the relationships of an ethnic group, individuals, natural forces, flora and fauna. In folk culture, they can be accepted as one of the forms of existence of the concept “Sin”. After the end of the mythological period, the prohibitions became the property of folklore, and some even to this day have not lost their relevance.

In folklore, “Sin” can also manifest itself as a certain image. However, this can be traced not in such small genres as prohibition, belief, proverb but in broader texts with a plot. In such samples, “Sin” acts as an enemy of the soul, as its destroyer; and they detail how difficult it is to be cleansed from sin. As “Sin” is a concept referring to the spiritual sphere, the spiritual life of a person, people with a common value system and the same folklore traditions will have the same reaction to behavior that they consider to be a sin. That is, the number of such is limited and equal to the number of members of the ethnic group, tribe.

When analyzing a folklore sample at the plot-compositional and character level, consideration of “Sin” not as a notion or image but as a concept is more useful from a scientific standpoint. In some significant studies, the category of sin has been researched from different scientific positions on the basis of folklore materials. For example, G.P. Fedotov who studied spiritual verses identifies three types of sin in the spiritual law: sins against mother earth and tribal religion; sins against the ritual law of the church; sins associated with the violation of the Christian law of love” (Fedotov, 1991, p. 75). Analyzing folklore and ethnographic material S.M. Tolstaya approaches this topic in an ethno-cultural aspect. According to Tolstaya (2000, p. 10), “a simple version of sin can be reconstructed on the basis of indirect features”. On the other hand, Theodor Reik writes in his work “Myth and Guilt: The Crime and Punishment of Mankind”: “The tension between the demands of the superego and the actual ego is experienced as guilt feeling” (Reik, 1957, p. 11).

The concept “Sin” finds its artistic embodiment by certain means. It is an element of the collective consciousness and is specific to each ethnic culture; it is a unit dressed in a verbal shell hinting at spiritual values, prohibitions and

instructions that have passed into the form of activity, and later are expressed in various folklore genres. The logical structure of the prohibition consists of two parts: a direct prohibition ("don't do this", "you must not do this") and its motivation, that is, the reason ("if you do this, then this and that will happen") (Toporkov, 1985, p. 82).

The explanatory plot substantiating the reason for the existence of the prohibition acts as its motivation, makes the presented scenario clear on the example of a specific event. The Russian scientist I. S. Brileva in her research gives examples that contain both sin and its motivation, for example: "You should untie the knots of what is put in the coffin, otherwise everything will go badly" (belief); "To kill a grass- snake is a sin, but it is necessary to kill a viper" (belief); "You can argue, but swearing is a sin" (proverb); "Fight with sin, make peace with the guilty" (proverb); "If you hide the sin of another, God will forgive you two sins" (proverb) (Brileva, 2007, p. 11).

Along with the fact that the samples belong to different genres, they express some instructions. In Russian folklore there are legends, fairy tales telling about what will happen if you violate and do not follow the instructions. For example, there are interesting texts regarding instructions related to the grass-snake and the viper. So, among the Russians, it is considered a sin to kill a grass-snake that has crawled into the house. If this prohibition is violated, the owner of the house dies. Therefore, you just need to take the grass-snake out of the house. A poisonous snake, on the contrary, must be killed. In this case, many sins of a person are forgiven. Commenting on the prohibition expressing the concept of "Sin" in a small paremic unit, revealing its essence, substantiating its causes determines its transformation into such broader genres as a story and a legend. The fact that killing a grass- snake is considered a sin is rooted in the Old Testament. Developing ancient Christian stories the people created variants of legends of an etiological nature, and the connection of the mentioned prohibition with them is obvious. So, in the eschatological plot telling about the global flood and Noah's ark, you can find the answer to the question "For what reason is grass-snake considered a sacred creature in popular thinking?" According to legend, a gap formed in Noah's Ark and the grass-snake closed it with its body and thereby saved everyone.

If we draw an analogy, then for the Islamic world the spider is such a sacred creature. The spider weaved a web at the entrance to the cave and thereby saved the prophet Muhammad, who was hiding there from enemies. For this reason, killing a spider is considered a sin. The complication of the plot of the texts about the punishment for violating the prohibition is due to the addition of motives

related to the washing away of sins. The washing away of sins is carried out with the help of magical rituals and spells (words or word complexes). The magical symbols in early texts were replaced by certain religious attributes in later cultures. Usually, by repeating individual elements of motives in the narrative, adding several characters to the narrative, the development of the plot and the expansion of the text are achieved. For the compositional completeness of the work, as well as to enhance its educational impact, the prohibition is given in the form of a formula at the beginning and end of the text.

The model of the world in mythological thinking, people's ideas about the other world occupy a special place in the folklore samples. The mutual influence of this and the other world is obvious. The imbalance in the world is considered the result of sinful deeds; for all this a certain punishment is provided. Sometimes not the one who commits the sin is punished but the one on whom the sin is directed. For example, if during the funeral some rules, rituals are not observed, then the deceased will be punished for this in the other world. Such categories as punishment, fear, inevitability, death coexist with the concept "Sin".

In many texts, the immediate punishment for sin in this world and not during the Last Judgment or in the other world comes from the connection of time-spatial categories with an early archaic worldview in the narrative. Sin is understood as ingratitude towards God, disrespect for His blessings, for sacral personalities (prophets, saints), violation of subordination in the relationship between the elder-junior in the family, and violation of ethical and moral rules. In a number of texts, the subjects of punishment are God, Khyzyr, Jesus and other prophets, representatives of the Christian and Islamic religions who have risen to the rank of holiness.

In folklore samples of different genres, there are various combinations of such motives as trial, warning, worthy behavior, reward, repentance, atonement for sin, and mercy. The character is required to make both a physical and spiritual effort to atone for sin. For example, crawling on your knees to a temple, a place of worship, shrines, fasting and praying, etc. Another way, more characteristic of archaic thinking, is to find a common language with the injured party. Consequently, both religious-monotheistic and archaic mythological views are reflected in the motive of "atonement for sin."

The texts stress the major sin through a number of means. For example: the correspondence of the form of punishment to the nature of sin, the connection of sin and punishment with the concept of "blood feud" (the family, clan, or the entire tribe of the guilty must suffer), the extraordinary

nature of punishment (stupefaction, turning into ashes, turning hands into hooves), an inglorious end of life (drowning, disappearance, etc.). The listed means in numerous variants are presented in the folklore of different peoples.

The story VIII of the famous monument of the Oghuz Turks "The Book of Dede Gorgud" can serve as a vivid example of how a whole tribe was punished for the guilt of one person. Giving in to the lust Sary Choban commits a triple sin: 1) He commits adultery; 2) He does it without the consent of the other party (rape); 3) Affected side is a sacred being - peri- an exquisite, winged spirit (water nymph) renowned for her beauty. Tepegöz (Goggle-Eye) born as a result of this forbidden relationship is the material expression of the listed sins. The fact that he is an ugly, scary, disgusting creature is equivalent to the magnitude of Sary Choban's sin. The entire tribe is responsible for regulating the relationship between society and natural forces. That is why the punishment is due not only to Sary Choban but also to the entire Oghuz people (Zeynalov & Alizadeh, 1988, p. 98).

In the book "The Book of Dede Gorgud", the motives "sin" and "punishment" are sometimes used episodically, without any comments, and sometimes they are used with all components, in all details. For example, in the story XI, an Oghuz bey named Alp Rustam Son of Dozan participates in only one episode - the battle scene. However, the explanatory epithet in front of his name (who killed two of his brother's children) gives information about the sin that haunts him and torments his conscience: Alp Rustam Son of Dozan who killed two of his brother's children and is very unhappy (Zeynalov & Alizadeh, 1988, p. 121).

This means that Alp Rustam killed two of his brother's children and, feeling a sense of remorse, is very unhappy. Since this information is not commented on in the epos (perhaps the story telling about this has not survived to this day), the reader can make certain guesses and versions. Perhaps Alp Rustam committed this crime by accident, unintentionally, or maybe he became a victim of vile slander. This type of sin (fratricide, the killing of innocent people) can be attributed to the archaic category. The first murder in the history of mankind is recorded in the sacred books: Cain and Abel are the first two sons of Adam and Eve. The brothers made sacrifices to God, but God favored Abel's sacrifice instead of Cain's. Cain then murdered Abel.

Bogazja Fatma and Gysirja Yenga are reputed to be profligate. Beyrek (Deli Ozan) publicly reproaches them for their sins at the wedding celebration (Zeynalov & Alizadeh, 1988, p. 64). Oath-breaking is also a sin. This is confirmed by the murder of Beirek who was punished

for not keeping his word given to the daughter of pagan (Zeynalov & Alizadeh, 1988, p. 59).

The narrative with the plot "punishment for sin" can exist independently. At this time, a specific event is narrated, and the norm is inspired and fixed in the minds of the listeners. Or the text emerges as a commentary on a unit formed in the shape of a belief or a parable. The legend called "The Petrified Shepherd and the Flock" says: the shepherd, who drove his flock to the summer pasture, spent the night near the sanctuary. He lit a fire and said to himself: "If this fire is still burning when I return, I will offer seven sacrifices." When the shepherd returned, he saw that the fire was still burning. However, he did not fulfill his promise and therefore turned into stone along with his flock (Pirsultanli, 2009, p. 72).

In this legend, sin is disrespect for holy places, sacred persons, failure to fulfill a promise, not keeping a word. Through the event mentioned in the text listeners are urged not to commit such acts. "The motive of turning into stone" performing a saving function in many legends in this case acts as a retribution. Similar versions of the above legend are found in samples recorded in Anatolia. For example, one of the legends speaks of a shepherd suffering from thirst along with his flock. The search for water was unsuccessful, and the desperate shepherd turned to God with a plea for help. The shepherd promised to make a sacrifice if God would fulfill his request. Although God complied with his request, he killed the louse found in his head and considered that by doing so he fulfilled his duty and made a sacrifice. For this God turned the shepherd and his flock into stone (Sakaoğlu, 1980, p. 29). The same legend was recorded and published on the territory of Azerbaijan (Imanov, 2002, pp. 67–68). This is an example how the commonality of the spiritual values of peoples causes obvious similarities.

Contempt to the blessings of the Almighty is also one of the severely punished sins. In one of the Anatolian legends presented by Sakaoğlu, it is said that among the people who moved to the summer pasture there was a young woman with a baby in her arms. On the way, the baby defecated. The woman did not find how to wipe her baby and used lavash for this (lavash is unleavened white bread in the form of a thin flatbread made from wheat flour) For this sin, God turned all the people of that village along with the flocks into stone (Sakaoğlu, 1980, p. 29).

It is important to mention that in ancient times, the preservation of order in the life of the tribe, the behavior of individuals, the regulation of relations between the person standing at the top of the hierarchical level and other people, as well as the relations between society and

natural forces, were carried out precisely through prohibitions. Prohibitions not only fixed the sinfulness of specific actions but also replaced the current criminal code (constitution). Each nation had its own system of values that had been formed over the centuries. Both good deeds and sin are revealed in the context of this system.

All this was conveyed to youth through folklore and in order to instill common values in people, they are transferred to literary texts. An analysis of the samples covering the concept of "Sin" shows in some cases the similarity of plots and motives related to this topic among different peoples. This, in turn, indicates the similarity of the spiritual and moral dominants of these peoples. The typological nature of this similarity is confirmed by the fact that these motives and plots were formed not under external influence, but on their own among the people. Their similarity among different peoples is associated with the same algorithms of thinking in similar situations. In this case, a person's belonging to a certain people, race does not play a role, since they all share the same value structure. However, the motives and plots "sin and its punishment" were sometimes transferred from one people to another in the process of various contacts and ties; and having adapted to the new environment they were enriched with national nuances.

Among the reasons for the similarity, the existence of a common source cannot be ignored. Such sources include sacred books of different religions. The legends going back to the Torah, the Psalter, the Bible and the Koran sometimes differing from each other, tell about punishment, good deeds, atonement for sins, forgiveness, etc. These legends in popular interpretation continue to live among the masses. For example, who does not know the legend of original sin? Original sin arose from Adam and Eve's transgression in Eden, the sin of disobedience in eating the forbidden fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

God punished them for this by expelling them from paradise. God doomed women to labor pains, all people became mortal, and it was all the result of this sin. It should be noted that in subsequent periods in Jewish folklore and literature, new motives and details were added to this plot. For example, Adam before Eve had a rebellious wife named Lilith. Or the reason that the devil tempted the first people was his jealousy of Adam, his desire to eliminate him and marry Eve. I. V. Silantiev devoted the second chapter of his book "The Theory of Motive in Russian Literary Studies and Folkloristics: An Essay on Historiography" to stories about Adam and Eve in the Jewish tradition after the Gospel. The numerous examples

he cites demonstrate the breadth and richness of folk fantasy (Silantiev, 1999, p. 54).

In some legends, "sin" is realized in connection with people's ideas about the other world, about the afterlife. In the texts of the legends about traveling to the other world in an unconscious state or in a dream, terrible after-dream hellish torment of some people for their sins are described. The main function of these texts is the motivation of the moral and ethical norms of everyday life. The journey to the next world of a person who is promised heavenly pleasure is described as a reward for his high morality and worthy behavior. In fact, this creates a contrast between the torment and suffering of sinful souls described in the text. In another group of legends, the sending of a sinning character to the realm of the dead is aimed at his correction, his conscious rejection of a sinful way of life. This is justified by various means in the narrative.

In folklore samples, there are also motives associated with giving a person a chance to change his own fate or the fate of his near and dear ones. And this path runs through a short-term journey to the other world. Knowing about the punishment awaiting him or his relative, the character performs the necessary action to atone for the sin. It is the atonement of sin that can save the guilty person from eternal torment, from becoming a resident of hell. During the journey into the world of spirits after death, the main character is shown many people sentenced to various torments. In order to avoid this fate, the character chooses the ascetic path. This is one of the ways of cleansing from sins which implies thrift, voluntary exposure to hardships. For example, in one of the Russian folklore samples, after a "journey" to the other world, the hero must weave a rope from flax or hemp fibers, or a chain from an onion for thirty years in order to save his parent from hell (Afanasiev, 1859, pp. 30–32).

Repentance evokes in the sinner such feelings as pangs of conscience, awareness of guilt, pain in the heart. For this reason, in narratives, forgiveness on the part of God is presented not as the elimination of punishment but as the liberation of the sinner from the burden of sin felt physically. In the texts, the verbal expression of this is reflected in the following variants: "it was as if a weight had fallen from my heart"; "as if he took a load off his shoulders"; "as if I felt relieved", etc. In a religious sense, the character completes the spiritual path.

Considering this, the messages of the plots covered by the concept of "Sin" can be generalized as follows: there is a parallelism between this life and the afterlife; people's destinies are interconnected; every sin will end in a certain punishment, but there is alternative to punishments.

In the samples on the topic under consideration, the motives united in various combinations formed different plots. One can cite such motives as “committing a sin and being punished for it”, “continue to commit sins” (not to feel remorse); “to be cleansed from sin”; “reward for meritorious behavior”. It is relevant to mention that in the folklore texts of the peoples of the world, there is an expansion of the narrative due to some motives. For example: “committing not one but several sins”; “stage-by-stage cleansing from sins, repetition of the actions provided for this”; “succumbing to the temptation of evil forces to go astray from the righteous path”; “another character incites the main character to a sinful act”; “informing the sinner that his soul will be destroyed by a sacred person (a handsome old man, a prophet, etc.)”; “the devil informs the sinner of his fate after death”, etc.

The purpose of episodes related to the other world is to find the answer to questions that concern people. So, seeing that a person mired in sins lives very well, and a good innocent person is punished, people can feel hopeless. However, this is a misconception. Folklore insists that the return of human deeds (both good and bad) occurs not only during his temporary earthly life but also in the post-mortal eternal life. In fact, this is an attempt to reveal the secrets of being. There are texts in which both cases are realized. Injustice in this world appears before the highest real judgment - before the sentence of God. It is by the decision of God that sinners are doomed to eternal torment in the other world, and the righteous are rewarded with heavenly pleasure.

The figurative expression of the concept “Sin” is manifested in the creation of an association with punishment in a sharp form, the disclosure of the essence of sin by the form of punishment, its visibility. There are examples of this in Greek mythological texts. Let us recall the myth that served as the source of the well-known expression “The torments of Tantalus” “Tantalus was the favorite son of Zeus, the king of Sipil, the owner of untold wealth. Tantalus was so proud of himself that he doubted on the omniscience of the gods and decided to check it out. He killed his son Pelops, cooked a dish of his meat and served it to the feasting gods. Those, however, immediately understood the intention of Tantalus and didn't touch the food. The shoulder-blade was eaten absent-mindedly by the goddess of fertility Demeter, immersed in sadness over her disappeared daughter Persephone. The gods collected this terrible food in one pan and resurrected the young man. Seeing the absence of one shoulder, Zeus ordered Hephaestus to make him an ivory shoulder blade. Since

then, everyone had a white spot on one shoulder in the Pelops' dynasty. Zeus sent Tantalus to the realm of Hades, the world of darkness. Thus, Tantalus is most famous for his punishment in Tartarus: he was made to stand in a pool of water beneath a fruit tree with low branches, with the fruit hanging just out of reach, and the water always receding before he could take a drink. Zeus condemned Tantalus to the Afterlife, where he would be thirsty and hungry for eternity in the midst of abundance (Neihardt, 1990, pp. 127–130). As can be seen, in the very punishment of Tantalus there is a message about the sin he committed. Both are related to food and gastronomic needs.

In certain cases, the punishment is carried out by means of fire (the sinner turns into ashes, his property burns, he boils and dies in a fiery river, in boiling tar, he has to grab onto a burning support, etc.). In some languages, in the etymology of words denoting the concept “sin” lies the meaning of “fire”, “flame”, “warmth”. For example, it is assumed that the Russian word “sin” comes from the verb “to warm”. Here it is appropriate to recall Islamic ideas about sinners who will burn in hell, and boil in cauldrons with boiling tar.

The description of sin according to this principle characterizes the artistic world of folklore samples. Here abstract categories find their objective manifestation in concrete images. Repentance and cleansing from sins are presented in visible and touchable real images. The character must perform inconceivable actions to be cleansed of sins: he must shed tears on the charred firebrands until bushes and flowers grow on them (Sadovnikov, 2019, pp. 292–297); wash with burning tears (Azbelev, 1992, p. 240); he must tend the flock of black sheep until they become white. The figurative symbolic series of these plots is built on contradictory concepts, contrasts: black - white, dirty - clean, dead - alive, to wither - to blossom, closed - open, to be captured - to be freed, etc. The first side of these contradictions is connected with sin and acts as a result of forbidden actions. The second side is associated with forgiveness, cleansing from sin. The opposition of the concepts “pure, sinless - dirty, sinful” is realized by “washing away” sin. That is, the concept “sin” is comprehended through the image of “unclean”.

This way, the analysis of folklore samples from the plot-compositional standpoint, the consideration of images, symbols and associative series, as well as stereotypes, makes it possible to clarify the moments underlying the concept of “sin”. In this way, it is possible to determine the ethno-cultural content, and the specificity of the concept “sin” presented in the folk tradition.

CONCLUSIONS

The concept of sin is of a theological nature and refers to a transgression or violation of the moral and ethical principles established by a certain religion or belief system. This can be manifested through an action, thought or intention involving behavior considered morally incorrect, which goes against the commandments, precepts or established religious principles. In addition, sin can also involve harm or harm to other individuals or the community in general. It is considered a break in the relationship with the sacred and can have spiritual, emotional, or social consequences, such as feelings of guilt, separation from divinity, deterioration of interpersonal relationships and punishment in most religious conceptions.

With the examples shown in this study it can be verified how complex sin was perceived by ancient peoples, how many components and conceptual connections of sin are reflected in the texts, as well as how complex are the relationships between the characters and the development of the plot. On the contrary, the simpler the sin is explained, the greater the number of prohibitions it identifies, and the structure of the work has a more schematic character.

The texts about those who were punished for sins during their lifetime are of a religious nature, and they are more inclined to the logical structure of the prohibition. In legends in which sin is perceived as a spiritual and moral category (plots about repentance and cleansing from sins, about lust leading to sinfulness), as well as in texts in which the assimilation of spiritual and pragmatic rules took place (plots about punishment for sin after death) the various aspects of the concept are emphasized. In perspective, sin can be researched as a transitional category that is actualized in the study of the foundations of creation. The reason for the beginning and end of the world, the change of seasons, the root cause of some life events, etc. can be regarded as the result of sins committed by people in ancient times. And furthermore, when interpreting sinful and good deeds that are fateful for an individual people or for the whole of mankind one can refer to this concept. This aspect of the analyzed concept is revealed in folklore samples about the creation of the world and original sin, in etiological narratives, in eschatological legends, as well as in the contemporary stories about tragic events of recent years (natural disasters, revolutions, wars, etc.) which are perceived as God's punishment for the sins of mankind. Considering this, evidently the concept of "Sin" retains its relevance in folklore patterns of all times and societies.

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