

### **Formulae and syntactic structures in the heroic epic songs collected by Antal Reguly**

The aim of the paper is to reveal and illustrate the importance of phrase or syntactic patterns among the mnemotechnic tools used by Antal Reguly's northern Khanty singer. In autumn 1844, Reguly collected 12 heroic epic songs, amounting to cca 17,000 lines, from Nikilov Maxim, an old Sygva Khanty singer. Despite being already processed, translated and published, they have remained quite unknown in international folkloristics.

Epic got into the focus of attention, especially in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, because of the so-called Homeric question. The central problems of folkloristics in this respect were (a) how Iliad and Odyssey came into being; (b) whether they were work of one single poet or rather many contributors; (c) in what way singers can memorize long texts.

Investigations were conducted to Serbian oral epic by Milman Parry and Albert B. Lord, which research revealed that long Serbian epic poems were transmitted orally, and that singers compose pieces of epic poetry during performance. This realization, as well as the concept of composition-in-performance, gave rise to the study of specifics of oral poetry.

It was formulaic style that proved to be the most important feature of epic songs. In some cases, almost 100% of such texts is made up of formulas (cliches), i.e. units that are repeated in either the same form or with some kind of grammatical or lexical changes. Formulas are not uniform in different epic traditions because they are influenced by various specificities of language, metric rules, as well as stylistic particularities. Khanty heroic songs have also been characterized from this point of view.

Concerning the northern Khanty formulas, the structures of the nominal parts of formulas have already been described, while those of verbal formulas have not been investigated. In this paper, by way of several examples, it is shown that text composition is helped not only by simply using formulas and subformulas but also these units seem to follow syntactic patterns. It means that there exist a number of formulas that exhibit the same syntactic structure, although they are totally different from semantic point of view. However, it is not always prominent. It is regularly stem repetition, i.e. figura etymologica and word repetition that underline the same structure of various semantically independent formulas.

Thus, pattern following can be observed on syntactic level, in the strict sense of the word. Moreover, proven by numerous examples of a certain sentence pattern containing a lative case adverb, in numerous cases, a lot of formulas follow one pattern resulting in lots of sentences with similar structure only on the surface, while they do differ from syntactic point of view. It can be explained by well-known features of the northern Khanty language.

As there are a number of patterns clustering formulaic sentences, syntactic patterns must have had mnemotechnic function during the performance of long epic songs. Consequently, it can be claimed that, besides various forms of reduplication, use of parallel lines, many kinds of repetition etc., it belongs to the specific features of northern Khanty epic poetry that formulas tend to follow certain syntactic patterns.

*Keywords: Khanty, heroic epic, oral formulaic poetry, formula, sentence structure.*

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