

*T. V. Pashkova***KARELIAN MYTHOLOGICAL BELIEFS ABOUT
ANIMALS AND BIRDS
(ON THE EXAMPLE OF FOLK MEDICINE)**

In the beliefs of the Karelians, animals and birds act as significant elements of religious and mythological rites and rituals. Many peoples have tales, myths, beliefs and ceremonies that testify of the close relationship of man and the animal world. Traditional medicine, in which animals and birds are endowed with special functions, is no exception. The purpose of the scientific article is to identify the mythological ideas of Karelians about animals and birds in Karelian folk medicine. The studied material was also reflected in the Karelian national classification of diseases, in which, among others, groups of diseases from birds, animals and insects are absolutely clearly distinguished. The theoretical framework of the study is based on the scientific works of domestic and Finnish ethnographers and linguists. The sources for the linguistic analysis are dialect dictionaries of some Baltic-Finnish languages and etymological dictionaries of the Finnish language. All collected lexical and ethnographic material is analyzed in conjunction with closely related Karelian languages, as well as with ethnolinguistic data from the Russian language. As a result of the study, it can be clearly traced that the Karelians identified groups of animals and birds in the fauna and avifauna that could “send” various diseases to humans. However, they could become a means of curing these ailments. In the nomination of diseases, the similarity of the symptoms of the disease to the appearance of animals and birds is significant, which indicates a close relationship of man with the animal world.

Keywords: Karelian folk medicine, Karelian beliefs, mythology, Karelian folk names for diseases, Baltic-Finnish languages, medical rites, ethnolinguistics, nomination.

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The issue of the Karelian mythological fauna has not been extensively studied yet. It conceals many mysterious phenomena associated with the ancient religious worldview of the people. Such phenomena include mythological beliefs and rites associated with animals and birds. This article is devoted to the study of the role of animals and birds in predicting, spreading and treatment of diseases in the Karelian mythological tradition.

Some researchers who studied traditional medicine in Russian (see, for example, [Богоявленский 1966, Попов 1903, Торэн 1996]), Finnish (see, for example, [Kansanomaisen lääkitietous 1957] and Vepsian material (see, for example, [Винокурова 2016] addressed the issue of folk classification of diseases. Attempts to give a popular classification of diseases or characteristics of certain groups of diseases are also found in works devoted to the local traditions of the Karelians, beginning from the second half of the 19th century (see, for example, [Петров 1863, Покровский 1873, Paulaharju 1924, Pentikäinen 1971, Virtaranta 1958]). Among other groups of diseases, Karelians distinguished diseases derived from animals [Norvik 1983, 225]. This suggests that the Karelians systematized and classified the world of diseases, which seemed to them hostile and spiritualized. The Karelian

folk classification of diseases, though in a blurred form, has survived to our time. Two main groups of diseases are identified: diseases of religious and mythological origin and of natural origin. The border between them is quite mobile and reflects the process of the movement of popular knowledge of the world from irrational ideas to rational knowledge. The basis for the disease subgroups identified within these groups is based on two criteria – the source / cause of the origin of the disease and its anatomical or symptomatic topography [Пашкова 2018, 31–32]. Based on the collected published and unpublished materials, we have been able to determine that in the group of diseases of religious and mythological origin, diseases from birds, animals and insects are clearly distinguished. The diseases of this subgroup reflect the mythological beliefs of Karelians about animals, birds and insects as the “culprits” of diseases, which is confirmed by language data and treatment methods. Karelians tried to drive out the disease with the help of its own “carrier”, conducting special rituals [Пашкова 2018, 34; Пашкова 2019, 241]. Let us turn to some examples of diseases from animals and birds.

Diseases from animals

Let's consider the beliefs of Karelians associated with domestic animals: a dog and a pig.

Diseases from a dog. For many reasons, the dog is considered the oldest pet and the very origin of the lexeme ‘koira’ (Engl.: ‘dog’) indicates this (compare, *koira* (Finnish), *koira* / *koiru* / *koir* (Karelian), *koer* (Estonian), *koir* (Veps), *koira* (Vodsky language, Izhora language). According to the etymological dictionary, the lexeme *koira* is originally Baltic-Finnish and goes back to the ancient Uralic language [Suomen sanojen alkuperä 1992, 385]. In Slavic mythology, a dog is an animal that is endowed with dual symbols and various demonic functions [Славянская мифология 2002, 440]. A dog never stays in its place: it runs between another world and ours and transfers information from here to another world. So, for example, some peoples have a belief that a dog carries a disease to another world. But also people believed that the dog is the source of certain diseases, which is reflected both in the names and in the methods of their treatment.

So, for example, the disease “stye”, also known as hordeolum. Hordeolum in Latyn is a derivative of the word “hordeolus” simply related to hordeum (“barley”), after its resemblance to a barleycorn. This disease in Karelian language is *koiran* / *n’än’n’i* – literally, ‘dog + nipple’. This name was used because a barleycorn was similar in shape to a dog’s nipple. In the dialects of the Russian language, the reference word “dog” refers to the supporting elements of the “dog” lexical field of the disease ‘stye’. From the token ‘dog’ (‘пёс’ in Russian), the following stye names are formed: *песёц*, *песак*, *пёсык*, *песёнь*, *песёй*, *песёц-ячмень*, *песь-ячмень*. In the understanding of native speakers of this type of name, the motivation is “alive”: the etymology indicates that the dog is considered to be the cause of the disease and the method of its treatment (the stye is “transmitted” to the dog from the eye) [Березович 2007, 505].

North Karelians believed that stye appeared if they lured a dog through a window into a house or ate bread, but they did not give a single piece to a dog nearby. Livvic Karelians believed that you should not mimic a barking dog otherwise “*koiru andau koiran’n’än’n’in silmäh*” ‘the dog will give you stye of the eye’ [Virtaranta 1968, 74]. Tver’s Karelians asserted that there is an ancient tradition: if a person eats bread, and the dog at that time looks into his eyes (barks nearby), then it must be given a piece of bread. Derzhan’s and Tver’s Karelians believed that stye of the eye was formed if a person watched a dog pee. [Virtaranta 1986, 74]. In this case, you had to say right away: “*Šil’mäh šiul kokork*” ‘You see a bun / pancake / cake’ in your eyes [Norvik 1983, 229]. For the treatment of stye, all groups of Karelians baked pancakes or bread, pressed it to a sore eye, and then fed it to a dog [Virtaranta 1958, 227]. Kalevala’s Karelians, after giving bread to the dog, brushed the sore eye with the dog’s tail. [Инха 2018, 61].

Diseases from a pig. Already since ancient times, among the Baltic-Finnish peoples, there have been beliefs about the existence of the “lanugo” disease, which were associated primarily with the behavior of a pregnant woman. These beliefs indicated that the prerequisites for the appearance of the lanugo were incorrect or gross actions of a woman expecting a baby with respect to animals



(in some cases, a specific animal was indicated – a pig). So, for example, the Ludian Karelians believed that the reason for the lanugo was the urination of a pregnant woman on the pig's litter [Virtaranta 1963, 297]. The Finns also associated the appearance of the hair or bristles that covered the body of some newborns with the pig. [Ruotsalainen 1951, 179]. In Vepsians, the occurrence of the bristles was explained by a resentment of a pig against a person (for example, if a pregnant woman kicks the animal) [Винокурова 2015, 402].

The most common name in the dialects of the Karelian language and other Baltic-Finnish languages is *harjas* [Karjalan kielen... 1968, 175; Suomen sanojen... 1992, 142]. It is noteworthy that in the Baltic languages (compare, *šerys* (Lithuanian), *sars, saris* (Latvian) 'pork bristles') [Suomen sanojen... 1992, 142] the word *harjas* means 'pork stubble, like 'pig skin', not 'disease'. In Finnish dialects, the tokens *harjakset* 'bristles' are more commonly used than *sukaimet* 'bristles'. Obviously, they began to use it, denoting the disease 'lanugo', because the sharp bright hairs that appeared in newborns resembled stubble in stiffness and color. In some etymological sources, the use of *harjas* to indicate childhood illness is explained by the fact that tossing and turning with pain when the bristles appear on the back, the child makes characteristic sounds resembling pig grunts: "*lapsi röhisee, rytisöö, röhkiä*" 'the child grunts, pops, wheezes' [Ruotsalainen 1952, 155].

In the dialects of the Karelian language, the name *sugahan'i / sugahat* (compare, *sugased* (Veps language) is also common. The lexeme *suvas* (plural – *sugahat*) is formed from the noun *suka* 'bristle', of Aryan origin **śuka* ~ *sūkā* 'spearhead, needle, tooth' [Suomen sanojen... 2000, 209]. In the Karelian and Vepsian languages, the name 'sugahat' (lanugo disease) shows a metaphorical transfer from the meaning *suka* 'pork bristles (animal hair)' to the disease designation due to the similar structure of hair.

It is typical for Karelians to use in medical ceremonies parts of the body, viscera, or animal secretions that was considered "guilty" of the onset of the disease. The lanugo is no exception: the Karelians whispered Sunday prayers on lard, then rubbed the child's shoulders and back and soared the child in the bathhouse [Ruotsalainen 1951, 179]. In this method of treatment, the interweaving of pagan and Christian is clearly visible: prayer whispers on the fat of the "culprit" of the disease. The appeal in conspiracies to Jesus Christ and the Virgin Mary is characteristic of most Finno-Ugric and Baltic-Finnish peoples.

Diseases from birds

Signs of illness or death are common among Karelians. One of the predictors and carriers of diseases could be birds. In the beliefs of the Pomeranian Karelians, the whole world of birds is divided into two categories: good and evil. Both the categories presage "good" or "bad" by their special behavior or cries [Цейтлин 1912, 162].

Some groups of Karelians had beliefs about the appearance of diseases associated with the crow and the cuckoo. So, for example, the Tver's and Syamozero's Karelians considered a crow to be one of the "culprits" of a headache, when it used the hair that fell from a person's head to make a nest. The bird's pecking the hair caused a headache to the person who lost it. [Логинов 2008, 254; Virtaranta 1961, 217–218]. The cuckoo's cooing and defecation foreshadowed an imminent illness: if in the spring the cuckoo cuckoos for the first time to the person who goes out on an empty stomach, then he will be sick. [Михайловская 1925, 621; Огнева 2013, 140; Virtaranta 1961, 217–218]. For the Olonets's and Padan's Karelians, the first cuckoo call heard on an empty stomach indicated a specific disease – body lice infestation [Майнов 1877, 289; Покровский 1873, 91].

Perhaps these beliefs can be attributed to the fact that in the beliefs of the Finno-Ugric peoples, migratory birds are birds that fly to the realm of the dead for the winter, and return to the world of people in the spring carrying lice as representatives of the afterlife. Lice have a detrimental effect on the health of both birds and people, as they carry the energy of the afterlife [Hautala 1955, 128]. According to the etiological belief found in Belozersk's Veps, lice come from birds that scatter them on people during the spring arrival and autumn departure to warm countries: "*Konz lindud tulešatas, ka päävoidas teid ištusoi, i konzgi lätas, voidas ištus pääteid*" ('when birds start arriving, lice can sit

on their heads, and when they fly away (birds), lice can sit on their heads') [Винокурова 2015, 438]. The Finns also had a popular belief about cuckooing, which concerned the elderly: if in the spring a person in old age hears the cuckoo's cooing before eating something, then this year he or she will die or be very ill. To avoid this, elderly people put a crumb of bread under their pillow before going to bed, so that when they woke up, they immediately put it in their mouths [Vilkuna 1929, 110].

In the beliefs of the Tver's Karelians, there was a ban on the first bathing in the spring before the first cuckooing. Violation of this rule led to an emergency illness [Virtaranta 1961, 217–18].

The Karelians believed that birds could be responsible for the appearance of freckles. Such ideas are reflected in the names of this skin manifestation. On the territory of the Republic of Karelia, where the proper Karelian dialect is common, freckles are called *kurvičat*, *kurbičat*, and in Livvik-Karelian and Ludic Karelian dialects of the Karelian language – *kurmičča*, *kurmičču* [Karjalan kielen... 1974, 468; Kujola 1974, 144]. All these lexemes are derived from the noun *kurmoi* 'sandpiper' with the addition of the suffix -čču/ -čča, which carries the meaning of similarity in quality (for example, color similarity). It should be noted that this phenomenon is also reflected in other Baltic-Finnish languages, but in these languages other birds are identified as carriers of freckles: in the Izhora language this role is attributed to the swallow, the lexemes *pääskysenkirjat* ('pattern of the swallow'), *pääskysen kirjavat* ('variegated swallow') are used here, the first part of complex words is translated 'swallow' (*pääskynen*); in Estonian – black grouse *tedreltähed* ('black grouse pattern'), *tedreltähnid* ('pattern black grouse'), and swallow: *päästlase/tähed* ('swallow pattern'), *päästlase/kirjad* ('swallow pattern'). In Finnish, the names *teerenpilkku* ('black grouse spot'), *teerenpisamat* ('tete's freckles roar'), *teerenppiset* ('black grouse spots'), *teerenkirjat* ('black grouse pattern') are formed from the word *teeri* ('black grouse'), in some areas of Finland instead of the first part of the word *teeren-*, use *koppelon-* (*koppelo* 'deafness'). On the territory of Finland, rough names for freckles are also used: *teerenpaska*, *teerenpaskat* (literally, 'black grouse faeces').

This is due to people's belief that if in the spring a person finds oneself under the tree on which the grouse coos, and the bird defecates on the head of the person, then the person will have freckles (*teerenpaskat*). There are different opinions on the presence of bird names in the above-mentioned lexemes. One of them is the similarity in color of freckles with the plumage of birds such as black grouse, grouse and sandpiper. Others believe (and this view is held by the majority) that birds for some reason "send" freckles to people. For example, the Karelians used to believe that if a pregnant woman ate a grouse egg, her child would be born with freckles. In Karelia, there was a belief that if a person destroys a swallow's nest, this person will get freckles [Heikinmäki 1976, 467–468]. Slavic peoples also considered the appearance of freckles as a payment for the destruction of the swallow's nest. The southern Veps had a common idea of the swallow as a carrier of freckles (eggs of the swallow with characteristic ashy or reddish dots resemble freckles) [Винокурова 2006, 64].

In the villages of South Veps the a magical method was used to get rid of freckles: having seen the first swallow in the spring, the sufferer with this deficiency took milk in his mouth, crept up to the bird and looking at it, washed his face with milk, so that his face was white, without freckles. Most likely, this healing rite was of Russian origin [Винокурова 2015, 381]. Among Karelians such methods of treatment could not be found, and when the author collected field material, informants pointed out that freckles were not treated in any way.

Another spring disease in the Karelian names which can be traced to the bird names is cold urticaria or literally, 'hives on legs' 'цыпки на ногах' (Karelian proper dialect, Livvik-Karelian *variksen/šoappoat* / *varoin/suappuat* – literally, 'crow boots'; Livvik-Karelian *varoin/kotat* – literally, 'crow cats (the walkers)', *varoin/käpčät*, *varoin/luapat*, *varoin/sorkat* – literally, 'crow's feet', *varoin/varbahat* – literally, 'crows toes') [Karjalan kielen... 2005, 500]. According to the Northern Karelians, in the spring every person had pimples on their legs. A resident of Babya Guba village said: "Pienenä poikana kun keväällä juoksentelima pävilöissä pal'l'ahin jaloin niin ämmö varotti meitä jotta työ soatta variksen soappoat!"... "Муõ kyselemmä ämmöltä jotta mimmoiset ollah ne ne variksen soappoat ta miten niitä sais. Ämmö sanou jotta ne ollah hyvin kaunehet, kiltetäh ta kriičketät



jotta kaikki sroas'ti..." [Karjalan kielen...2005, 500] ('As a little boy, when we ran barefoot through the thaw in the spring, our grandmother warned us that welts (literally, 'crow's boots')! ... We ask grandma what, what kind of crow's boots they are, and how to get them. My grandmother says that they are very beautiful, glisten and creak (author's note, in this case, the squeak meant the sound of cracking skin) so that everyone is afraid...').

When the crows flew by in flocks, the children shouted to them as they ran through the puddles: "*Prau prau vel'em poika, anna miula soappoat, t'innanät, t'inaperät, kaplukkakantaset, kaprehennahkaset!*" ('Kar-Kar son of a brother, give me boots, with pewter noses and backs, with heels, made of goat skin!') [Virtaranta 1958, 147] (translated by the author). After running on the cold, wet ground, the children's skin burst on their feet and became similar, as the Karelians believed, to the crow's feet, so in the Karelian language, names containing the first component of the lexeme varoin 'crow' appeared in relation to this skin disease. The Veps believed that the crow is the carrier of the skin disease *varišn jougad* (literally, 'crow's feet'), since the crow is a filthy creature closely associated with the underworld [Винокурова 2006, 77].

Unlike Karelians from Karelia, the Tikhvin, Tver, and Novgorod Karelians used the name *kurrensuapat* (literally, 'crane boots'), because the cold urticaria appeared in the spring, exactly at the time when the cranes arrived (in addition, the cranes spend most of their time in or near the water), and the Karelians believed that the cranes bring this disease [Heikinmäki 1976, 464]. In the Novgorod Karelians, children did not bathe in the stream until the cranes purred, so that no welts appeared on their legs ("*što kurgi ei tois' šappaida*" – 'so that the crane did not bring a boot') [Слушаю карельский... 2001, 199].

When treating cold urticarial or welts, Tver Karelians uttered conspiracies in which they addressed a crane, crow, or magpie with a request to pick up the welts: "*Kurret, karret, muštat bronit, ki'avat harakat, voinan svojakat, ottakkua omaš čipkat, andakua omat tervehet jallat*" – 'Cranes, cranes, black crows, variegated magpies, brothers-in-law of war take your welts, give your healthy legs' [Heikinmäki 1976, 465] (translated by the author). Baby welts were treated in a bath: steamed the child's legs, saying: "*Kurjet, käjet, mustat korpit, harmuat harakat, sikojen svajakat ottakkua omaš čipkat*" ('Cranes, black crows, grey magpies, pigs in-laws take their chicks'). After that, the weather-beaten places were smeared with cream [Virtaranta 1961, 204]. These examples, once again, confirm the belief of the people that the real cause of the disease was migratory birds and crows that were always nearby.

Summing up, based on the mythological beliefs of Karelians about animals and birds as the "culprits" of diseases, it can be noted that there is a clearly distinguished group of diseases from birds, animals and insects within the group of diseases of religious and mythological origin. This is confirmed by language data and treatment methods. Beliefs in the prerequisites for the emergence of diseases, their causes, their names and ways to get rid of diseases among the Baltic-Finnish peoples (Karelians, Vepsians and Finns), as well as among Russians, give evidence of the close connection between man and the animal world, which is reflected in folk medicine. In the names themselves, motivation for external similarity predominates. The described disease manifestations are named after the resemblance to real animals and birds: dogs, chicks, cranes, pigs and other/ However, some groups of Karelians still have beliefs that the names are associated with punishing by animals or birds for rude behavior in relation to an animal or bird (for example, bristles) or violation of prohibitions (for example, freckles). Medical rituals are directly related to the "use" of the animal itself or the appeal to the bird in the form of a conspiracy.

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КАРЕЛЬСКИЕ МИФОЛОГИЧЕСКИЕ ПРЕДСТАВЛЕНИЯ О ЖИВОТНЫХ И ПТИЦАХ (НА ПРИМЕРЕ НАРОДНОЙ МЕДИЦИНЫ)

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В верованиях карелов животные и птицы выступают как значимые элементы религиозно-мифологических обрядов и ритуалов. У многих народов существуют мифы, верования и обряды, которые свидетельствуют о тесной связи человека и животного мира. Не исключением стала и народная медицина, здесь животные и птицы также наделяются особыми функциями. Цель статьи – выявление мифологических представлений карелов о животных и птицах в карельской народной медицине. В карельской народной классификации заболеваний абсолютно четко вычлняются, среди прочих, группы болезней, «перешедших» к человеку от птиц, животных и насекомых. Теоретической базой исследования послужили научные труды отечественных и финляндских этнографов и языковедов. Источниками для лингвистического анализа стали диалектные словари некоторых прибалтийско-финских языков, этимологические словари финского языка. Весь собранный лексический и этнографический материал рассматривается в связке с близкородственными карельскому языками, а также с этнолингвистическими данными русского языка. Проведенное исследование позволило сделать вывод, что карелы выделяли в фауне и орнитофауне группы животных и птиц, которые могли «наслать» на человека различные заболевания. Однако они могли

стать и средством излечения этих недугов. В номинации болезней у карелов является важным сходство симптомов недуга с внешним видом животных и птиц, что указывает на тесную связь человека и природы в национальной картине мира.

Ключевые слова: карельская народная медицина, верования карелов, мифология, карельские народные названия болезней, прибалтийско-финские языки, лечебные обряды, этнолингвистика, номинация.

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