

## What Can Ethnic Values in Mari Anthroponyms Teach Us?

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**Abstract:** This study shows a system of ethnic values in Mari personal names based on the results of a multi-sided investigation. It was carried out with the help of a complex technique applied to 7,525 anthroponyms from the Dictionary of Mari Personal Names compiled and published by S. Chernykh in 1995. Mari anthroponyms have never before been the object of research. They represent an almost forgotten part of Mari traditional culture as at present they are rarely used among the Maris. The process of investigation includes several steps. The most important of these is the semantic analysis which helps to discern twenty one values united into four groups showing the most appreciated phenomena of life as expressed in the analyzed anthroponyms. Quantitative data evaluation singles out a dominant group by a dichotomous method applying the principle of simple majority employed in mathematical statistics. The same technique divides the other values into complementary, auxiliary and insignificant groups. The results of an investigation into ethnic axiology are also shown graphically. The main idea underlying the names is to ensure the future conflict-free existence owing to one's health, vigor and good relationship within a family and a clan.

**Key words:** Values, anthroponyms, mathematical statistic, semantic analysis, dichotomous method

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### INTRODUCTION

The objective of this study is to show a system of traditional values in Mari anthroponyms based on the results of an interdisciplinary approach including a complex of methods and techniques applied to 7525 personal names from the Dictionary of Mari Personal Names compiled by Chernykh (1995).

Anthroponymy, being a separate branch of a language system is a source of information for such spheres of knowledge as history and ethnography, anthropology and genealogy, folklore studies and cultural studies as well as axiology.

Research into personal names on the basis of cultural studies, stressing the interdependence of ethnic language and culture is considered relevant as personal names occupy an important place in the collective language conscience representation. In A. F. Losev's work "The Philosophy of Names" the author shows that personal names concentrate cultural wealth accumulated during centuries as in a word there is "a meeting of all possible and imaginable layers of existence". The focus of all spheres-physiological, psychological, phenomenological, logical, dialectic and ontological-is in the name (Losev, 2009).

The understanding of a personal name as a word having a form and a meaning requires a systemic approach embracing a combination of methods and techniques employed both in the humanities and the exact sciences. As has already been mentioned, personal names might also be viewed in connection with the symbolic and axiological systems of an ethnos.

The value systems of different nations are not the same and this fact may lead to misunderstanding when peoples come into contact. Of course, there are universal moral standards, norms and values but their importance and the systemic ties among them are different. Knowledge of an ethnic system of values constituting the core component of ethnic identity holds much significance as the knowledge of them allows one:

- To avoid interethnic tensions and conflicts (especially in multicultural, polyethnic regions)
- To predict the behavior of representatives of different ethnic groups
- To model results of interethnic communication
- To effectively manage people
- To form an educational system
- To create advertisements of goods and services for any particular ethnos, etc.

The values of every nation are organized into a system. In it all of them are interconnected and differ from each other by their importance (Glukhov and Glukhova, 2012; Glukhova *et al.*, 2015).

Mari ethnic anthroponyms which have never been the object of research with the aim of an axiological ethnic paradigm reconstruction and existing for centuries over a vast territory are the ingenious result of the creative work of many generations that has been tested by time.

We hypothesize that they embrace Mari authentic ethnic values, only indirectly connected with the economic value theory, organized into a system.

### **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

It is difficult to analyze anthroponyms nowadays because of their polysemy and 'lost etymology' but to define the value in a semantic structure of names helps a definition of the notion 'value'.

Value is defined in dictionaries in varying ways but the most widespread meanings of it are:

- The importance or usefulness of something
- The amount of money that something is worth
- Ideas about what is right and wrong or what is important in life

Sometimes the word 'value' is synonymous with the word 'quality'. Complex research into personal names with the aim of defining a system of ethnic values implies a combination of semantic and statistical analyses.

The names are divided into groups of value-factors after which the extent of their mention is calculated. The obtained data are presented in Table 1 and then in the form of a figure. The algorithm of the research which was used in the analysis of Mari songs, proverbs and sayings (Glukhov and Glukhova, 2012) includes:

- The process of componential analysis of names with the aim of discerning values
- The compilation of the list of values
- The estimation of value incidence in the names and a calculation of the probability of value usage in the names
- The ranking of values in descending order of probability
- The singling out of main, auxiliary, additional and insignificant values by the method of consecutive dichotomy by the criterion of a simple majority
- The building of a histogram of probabilities
- The compilation of a matrix of values

- The calculation of the coherence and contradiction coefficients
- Conclusions and summarizing

The conclusions have been statistically proved and visually represented in a graph.

### **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Mari personal names are difficult to 'decipher' semantically as the etymology of many words go back to related Finno-Ugrian and Samoyedic languages and to the vernaculars of other tribes and peoples with whom the Mari had different types of interaction. S. Chernykh in the foreword to his dictionary notes that a complex composition character of the system of Mari personal names can be explained by five stages in its historical development: pre-Mari, ancient, medieval, transitory and modern.

When the Middle Volga Region was joined to the Russian State in the middle of the 16th century the intensified contacts of the Mari with the Russians became constant and diversified. Since, the 18th century in connection with the Christianization of all pagan believers (non-Russians), there appeared Christian names which started to displace the old pagan anthroponyms. Mari personal names contain elements of Finno-Ugric, Uralic, Turkic, Turko-Arabic, Persian-Arabic origin. Though Christian calendar names which came through the Russian language are active anthroponyms even nowadays, ancient names 'live' on in surnames, patronymics and toponyms.

Mari personal names can be root, derivative (consisting of a root and word-formative suffixes of different semantics), complex words and derivational compounds. In Mari names there are suffixes, forming names of objects and things, living beings, words with abstract meaning. Suffixes may impart derogative, diminutive connotations as well as the meaning of endearment.

Analysis has shown that Mari names contain an inventory of 21 values organized into four groups. The dominant group includes five of these. The results allow the arrangement of Mari dominant traditional values in the following order of priorities as shown in Table 1:

- Family (21%)
- Health (15%)
- Ethics (7.4%) meaning a strict hierarchy of moral norms with a strong accent on the respect of elders in the clan
- Wealth (6.7%)
- Clan (6.6)

Table 1: Distribution of values in mari personal names

Values	Amount	Probability	Values	Amount	Probability
Family	1567	0.210	Place of birth	242	0.032
Health (strength)	1113	0.150	Mind, brains	216	0.029
Ethics	560	0.074	Happiness	215	0.028
Wealth	508	0.067	Power	201	0.027
Clan (tribe)	503	0.066	Food	196	0.026
Beauty	440	0.058	Religion	185	0.025
Labour	302	0.040	Speech	110	0.014
Love	282	0.037	Honour	46	0.006
Youth	269	0.036	Freedom	38	0.005
Friendship	264	0.035	Motherland,	25	0.003
Time of birth	243	0.032	native place		

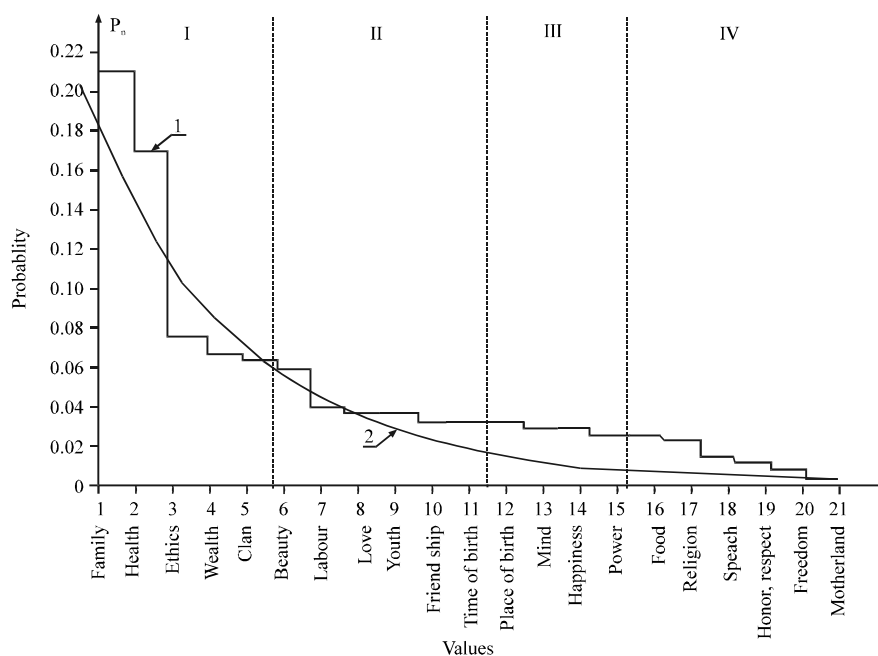


Fig. 1: The histogram of the probability distribution of values mentioned in Mari proper names and its approximation by the exponential distribution curve

The research results shown in Table 1 are further graphically represented in Fig. 1 with the approximation of the stepwise histogram of values by the exponential distribution curve.

The histogram analysis results have shown that the Mari rely excessively on help from their relatives, do not experience ethical problems and do not strive for wealth. The histogram also testifies to the fact that the system of values in Mari personal names is harmonious.

The high esteem of family life is proved by a large number of names in which there are such lexemes as 'hostess', 'host', 'father', 'mother', 'son', 'daughter', 'bridegroom', 'bride'. Thus, a female personal name Avguzja (ava 'mother'+kuza 'person'; gozja 'couple') means 'mother'. The male anthroponym Barbosaj (barba'master', 'family, clan head'+s <poslash 'to begin smth.'+the suffix-aj) has a meaning of 'father/head of a

family' as well as such names (as well as their phonetic variations) as Asyla, Asylaj (asyl 'root, tribe, forefather'), Atalak, Ataljak (<atjadyk: acha 'father'+the suffix-dyk: 'fatherhood'). Male names Achas, Achash 'paternal' (acha 'father'+the suffixes-s, -sh) speak about belonging to the paternal side of the family. The male anthroponym Vozai (vo-'a root') shows that its bearer is a progenitor of a clan.

Ilibika, Ilvika, female names have the meaning 'mistress, master's wife' (il 'tribe, people', 'tribe offspring' +bika/vika 'woman'), Vativi (vate 'wife, female'+the suffix-vi) means 'mother's daughter'.

The meaning of the female personal names with the component 'biketch' is motivated by its Turkic origin, meaning 'bride'. They are Ilbiketch (il+biketch), Tojvyketch (toj 'seed, grain'+biketch/viketch). Names denoting such notions as 'son', 'heir', 'descendant' have

a component 'toi': Tojbaris (toj 'grain, seed, egg'+baris/boris 'heir'), Tojdebeck, Tojdubeck, Tojtybek(toj+tyvik-tavik 'young shoots; young growth, a part of the family'+bek 'sturdy child; prince'). Tojdjak (toj+tjaka 'child).

The male anthroponym Shabozjak (shaba 'child'+ozak 'unmarried, single') means 'bridegroom' (Chernykh, 1995). Components of meaning may denote family members without a specification of a degree of kinship:

Otoj (kotoj 'father's, domestic') and Tokavi 'domestic' (toky 'to one's home'+the suffix -vi); Chetjak 'household member' (chet 'homestead, household'+the suffix -jak) (Chernykh, 1995).

A safe and happy family life depends on many conditions, the most important of which is health associated with strength and vigor.

This circumstance is expressed in names by such notions as 'vitality (vital capacity)', 'friskiness', 'soundness', 'energy'-qualities necessary for manual labor. Characteristic markers of such names are the components 'govat', 'bulat', 'bek', 'demir', 'bars', etc. The anthroponym Vajgovat means 'strong relative, giant' (vaj/vuj 'man+govat 'power/might, strength').

The male anthroponyms Bekbarys (bek 'robust'+barys 'panther, lynx'), Isanbaj (isan 'healthy'+ 'rich', baj 'master, owner' as well as a non-semantic component of many names), Pajboldo (paj 'rich', 'part'+bold 'steel'), Tajbulat (taj 'young horse'+bulat 'Damascus steel'), Tajdemir (taj 'young horse'+demir 'iron') denote a strong young man (Chernykh, 1995). They express wishes for people who have such names.

For a conflict-free life there should be maintenance of rules and norms of behavior. Therefore ethics proved to be one of the main values in the life of the ethnos. This concept includes 'peaceableness', 'composure', 'courage', 'protection'.

They are present in such names as Tyngybash (tyngy 'rest, repose, peace'+bash 'head' fig.: 'man'); Tynyskat (tynys 'peaceful, calm'+the suffix -at); Tynyk (tynys 'peaceful, calm'); Tynysh (tynys 'peaceful, calm'); Typash (typ 'quiet, gentle'); Arahcha (arachy 'defender, protector'); Babatyr (baba 'child'+batyr 'epic hero, a very strong and brave man'); Batyr (batyr 'epic hero, a very strong and brave man'); Batyrbai (batyr 'epic hero, a very strong and brave man'+bai); Batyrsha (batyr 'epic hero, a very strong and brave man'+the suffix -sha) (Chernykh, 1995).

In the female anthroponyms Symanaj (syma, shamy 'tender'+the suffix naj), Uvjasula (uvi 'a branch'+sula 'tender'), Shymavi (shyma 'tender, cordial') there are character features which are important for a calm and peaceful family life.

Along with the names (both for men and women) showing positive qualities there are anthroponyms where such ethical drawbacks as 'pugnacity', 'greed', 'laziness', 'obstinacy' are mentioned. The male names Jangar (jangar 'bully, pugnacious') and Shibaj (shibai 'brawler') point at an aggressive character of their owners and the male anthroponyms Aldurbaj, Aldyrbaj (aldyr 'greedy'+ baj mean 'greed' and 'avidity'.

Laziness is indicated in a name bearer in the anthroponym Jalakaj (jolagaj 'lazy person') and stubbornness and disobedience in the name Tupuj (tupuj 'stubborn, disobedient').

The anthroponym Jamangul (jaman 'nasty, mean, contemptible'+gul/kul 'slave') shows the general assessment of a person (Chernykh, 1995).

Wealth in Mari culture seldom indicated monetary means. More often it implied land allotment, part of a household, abundance of bread, etc. Kindubaj, Kindebaj (kinde 'grain'+baj 'a rich man') and Kavanaj (kavan 'cornstalk'+the suffix -aj) are translated as 'rich in grain', Kinebaj, Kinibaj (kine, kyne 'hemp'+baj) have the meaning of 'rich in hemp'. The male anthroponym ojush, Pojys originates from the contracted participle form of 'pojysho' 'grown rich; enriched' (Chernykh, 1995).

Personal names show that after the family members the nearest circle was the clan. The analyzed anthroponyms contain more than two dozen totem names.

The descendants of the Owl totem were called Tomona (tumna 'owl'). Totem names of the squirrel clan were Urmak, Urmek (ur 'squirrel'). Descendants of the Finno-Ugric tribes whose totem was a bear, had the names Upaj, Upa (upa 'bear') and Ushmasher (ush 'head'-mesher, möchör 'man dressed in a bear fur coat'). The anthroponyms Utis, Utish denoted men of the clan whose totem was a horse (ut 'horse') and a female name Chancha ('duck') spoke about belonging to the Duck tribe (Chernykh, 1995).

The clan is valuable because of mutual help. People from other clans were considered aliens. This fact indirectly testifies to the conclusions of ethnographers and historians on Mari ethnic affinity that it was an ethnolinguistic grouping of autonomous tribal unions and the difference among groups of the Mari ethnos began to establish itself and become distinctive only in the 9-11th centuries (Kozlova, 1978).

The next group, second in frequency of name occurrence, includes such notions as beauty (5.8%), labor (4%), love (3.7%), youth (3.6%), friendship (3.5%), time of birth (3.2%).

In female names, wishes for girls and women can be found. It is mainly beauty (Tekavi, 'beautiful, graceful girl'; Hitrivi 'very beautiful girl'; Evij, Epika 'tall, slender, beautiful girl, fairy') which is associated with tenderness

(Teksula 'charm, tenderness'), health (Sajgalche 'healthy'; Tomaj, Tomej, Tomij 'vigorous, healthy, strong'), youth (Uvika 'fresh, young'). Interchangeably with beauty there are qualities and skills necessary for work and a married life-to be skillful (Ustavi, Ustanaj 'a good hand, a skilled woman'), energetic and quick (Jylvij 'quick, agile, nimble'; Sajvina 'good energy', Sekevi, 'very energetic') (Chernykh, 1995).

But there are also names in the semantic structure of which 'ugliness', 'scruffiness', 'paleness' not only of women but also of men are mentioned (Pinesha; Sapaj, Sapka, Sirik, Rachaba, Shopij). The notions of attractiveness and prettiness in the meanings of names testify to the fact that in Mari culture the aesthetic criteria of beauty and harmony were highly valued.

One more value constituting the main group is labor. It is always positively valued as certain skills in such occupations as smith, hunter, carpenter, fisherman, boatman, reaper, etc. The male anthroponyms Apsat (<apshat 'smith'), Aptjak, Aptysh (<opta/apta 'traps for hunting animals and birds'), Aush (<auchy 'hunter') are good examples.

The notion work is usually present in the names denoting hard manual labor (Pashavaj 'worker', Pashavek 'inclined to work', Pasher 'practical', Pashej, Pashaj 'hard-working').

The meaning of the concept "love" in Mari proper names does not imply any sexual relationship but is often expressed as love for children. Children in the family played a great role as one of the most reliable guarantees for physical survival in old age and as the continuation of clan existence. In the following names there is a connotation of endearment: Vechuk 'a beloved offspring', Izerge 'child, small son', Izi, Izij 'little boy', Ichej 'youngest in the family', Ishutka 'family lad', Odigash 'offspring', Ormemur 'child, baby'.

Youth is associated with strength and valued much more than old age. Young men in the family were considered important as efficient workers: Isanaj 'healthy husband', Satur 'strong, healthy, brave', Shabulat, Shablat 'strong, robust' (Chernykh, 1995).

In many names with the components tog 'to give birth, to father' and tos 'friend' the notion of "friendship" was widespread. Friendship allowed relying on help in heavy manual labor. The basis for friendly ties is a close proximity of living, neighborhood or the same age and is possible mainly within the bounds of the clan (Togan 'brother, relative', Toganash 'brother, relative', Togas, Togac, Togach 'friend', Toskej, Toski 'friend').

One more component in the name is the time of birth. Personal names contain periods of the day, days of the week, holidays, year; kinds of agricultural activities,

meteorological conditions and lunar phases. This component plays an insignificant role and is mainly connected with the agricultural cycle (Setvaj 'born in the morning', Ryti 'born in the evening', Temkech 'born during the daytime', Tojsumat 'born on Saturday', Shiavi 'born at threshing time', Shumatpika 'born on Saturday', Ervij 'morning child', Erkul 'morning child').

Judging by their incidence in the names, the remaining values are rarely made use of. They are:

- Place of birth (characterizing the value of different types of space). The most widely used are: house, yard, village, stove. Rarely used are: wasteland, field, forest, water, river, road, lake, sea)
- Happiness (is expressed as a wish and includes such components of meaning as: 'holidays', 'luck', 'cheerfulness', 'concord', 'peace')
- Power (the components 'murza', 'seit', 'bek', 'ataman'. Judging by their number, striving for power is not typical of the Mari)
- Mind, slyness (one possesses the usual worldly quickness as one does not need a special shrewdness: there are relatives all around, education is not available and there is no technical progress. Such qualities as naivety, stupidity, dullness, silliness also occur in the names)
- Food (has a very low rating. Hunger is not mentioned but there are words denoting stoutness)
- Religion (the dictionary showed that in the names there is a mixture of Muslim, Christian names and pagan terms as well as such words as 'house spirit', 'water spirit', 'devil' and 'ovda'); speech (is characterized, mainly negatively through such words as 'moaning', 'chattering', 'boasting', 'flattery', 'shriek', 'crying', 'grumbling')
- Honor (the presence of such lexemes presupposes a well-developed social structure which was absent, therefore the notion of "honor" in the names is not often mentioned)

The analyzed values in Mari proper names are organized into a system. While analyzing different systems the question arises as to how systemic the given set of elements is. To answer this one should introduce the notion of the ideal system where all elements are linked with each other by at least one connection and by recognizing that the system is definitely absent where there are no links among the elements.

Using a matrix interpretation, in the matrix squares of the ideal system there will be the figure "one", naturally with different signs "+1" and "-1". The absence of the system will be expressed by zeros, that is by the lack of

- The minimum meaning of the sum used for the calculation of the incoherence coefficient
- The maximum meaning of the sum used for the calculation of the coherence coefficient

	Family	Health	Ethics	Wealth	Clan	Beauty	Labor	Love	Youth	Friend ship	Time of birth	$\sum_{row} (-1) + \sum_{clmn} (-1)$	$\sum_{row} (\pm 1) + \sum_{clmn} (\pm 1)$
Family												0	7
Health							1					1	7
Ethics												0	3
Wealth												0	4
Clan												0	3
Beauty							1					1	6
Labor												2	6
Love												0	7
Youth												0	6
Friend ship												0	7
Time of birth												0	0

Fig. 2: Matrix of the main and auxiliary values in Mari anthroponyms

ties in all matrix squares. On this basis one can easily introduce a Coherence Coefficient of the Matrix of Values (CCMV) which can be written as:

$$CCMV = \frac{\sum_{row} (\pm 1) + \sum_{clmn} (\pm 1)}{n(n-1)}$$

where in the numerator is a sum of all units (numbers) in rows and columns and in the denominator the number of all squares, n-matrix arrangement. The range of changes of CCMV is between 0 and 1, in this case 0 means an absence of system, "1" is an ideal system where elements are linked with each other.

In Fig. 2, the matrix there are only main and auxiliary values as they constitute 80.5% of all analysed 21 values. The matrix incoherence coefficient of values (CIMV) is:

$$CIMV = \frac{\sum_{row} (-1) + \sum_{clmn} (-1)}{n(n-1)} = \frac{4}{11 \cdot 10} = 0.036$$

where, n = 11 is the number of values. The most harmonious value is "labor". Let us calculate the Coefficient of Coherence of the Value System (CCVS) in the Mari personal names considering the data on the main and auxiliary values. It comprises  $56/11 \cdot 10 = 0.51$ . Being in the range of linear otions on the meaning of the CCVS, we should anticipate that it is a harmonious meaning between the well organized and badly organized systems. Calculation of CCVS offers a chance to reveal

unnecessary system elements, removing which we increase the meaning of this coefficient. They are characterized by minimum sums of units. In this case, they are: ethics, clan and the time of birth.

## CONCLUSION

The analysis of 7525 Mari personal names shows that the Mari ethnic axiological priorities are organized into a harmonious system embracing four groups of 21 values. Plausibility of the results is guaranteed by the amount of the empirical material and the complex of methods and techniques applied to it.

The main meaning in Mari personal names lies in the guarantee and security of the future family and clan existence under conflict-free circumstances thanks to the health, strength and wealth of the family members. If these aims have been achieved it would not be bad to be clever and happy and obtain some power in one's own society. Other values are seldom mentioned.

The system of Mari personal names would be more coherent if the children had not been given names containing some negative characteristics connected with the infancy period. The baby grows up, the negative features disappear but the name still contains the reminders of that time. Naming the child by the clan name has also some incoherence by definition: the name should be personal, the family name should be added to the personal name but not replace it. Names reflecting the time of birth (winter, snowstorm, rain, etc.) were also unfortunate as they did not contain values important for

child growth and becoming an adult. The time of birth is accidental and there is no necessity to remember it throughout one's entire life.

The values expressed in Mari personal names contain the ideas of a wise economy of resources for clan survival. In summary, the analysis of the Mari personal names testifies to the pragmatism and wisdom of the name originators: the majority of names do not contain any contradictory or useless wishes which shows our ancestors' harmonious attitude towards life.

Sharing of such knowledge in the frameworks of specifically organized knowledge management programs for youth, for example, on the propagation of Mari culture can yield impressive results to individuals and organizations as this part of Mari unique culture is gradually disappearing from the life of the Maris.

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