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Research article

Cultural and historical features of Russian phraseological units originating from divination practice

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Abstract. The relevance of the study is defined by the anthropocentric paradigm of modern linguistics considering phraseological units as means for accumulating and transmitting ethnic culture, which reflect collective experience and mental attitudes of a certain linguistic and cultural community. Phraseological units originating from the archaic spiritual culture, including divination, are of particular interest. The study aims at identifying and classifying Russian phraseological units associated with divination and defining their semantic features in view of their historical and cultural background. The research material includes data from specialized phraseological and ethnolinguistic dictionaries, folklore and ethnographic collections, monographs and scientific articles on the history of fortune-telling rituals. Research methods include continuous sampling, descriptive analysis, etymological analysis, semantic analysis, and method of cultural commenting. The authors examine the etymological features of these phraseological units, describe their meanings, identify their internal form and figurative components, and highlight their national and cultural features based on their idiomatic imagery. The cultural specificity of the phraseological units is determined through linguistic-cultural analysis, considering the semantic periphery of the unit, which is not included in the conventional dictionary definition and is linked to extralinguistic reality. The study shows that Russian phraseological units originating from divination function as specific culturally significant onomasiological signs, which retain key elements of national cultural code. The analysis demonstrates that the semantics of these phraseological units is determined by specific historical period, while their internal form reflect magical and ritual practices. The authors conclude that the origin and functioning of these phraseological units highlights their role as a linguistic-cultural phenomenon, which accumulates archaic conscience, ethnocultural stereotypes, and historical memory of native speakers. The systematization of the phraseological units according to various types of fortune-telling practice shows their typological diversity.

Keywords: cultural linguistics, semantics, cultural connotation, cultural codes, fortune-telling

Authors' contributions: *Ageeva Yu.V.* — the research concept and methodology, the theoretical review, and scientific editing of the article; *Shtyrlina E.G.* — the article concept, the theoretical review, collection and analysis of empirical material, editing and preparation of the article.

Conflict of interest. The authors have no conflicts of interest to declare.

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Introduction

Linguists have always had a keen interest in the interaction between language and culture¹ (Wierzbicka, 1996; Bartmiński et al., 2021). Phraseology is the richest source of cultural and national interpretations of reality; it reflects the national worldview which represents unique ethno-cognitive experience with multifaceted knowledge about the life of a nation and its spiritual heritage (Buyanova, 2017; Krasnykh, 2017; Merkulova, Gerasimova, 2025). Phraseological units reflect the most diverse aspects of language speakers' life: their way of life, history, traditions, customs, and the peculiarities of their worldview (Teliya, 1996; Melerovich, Mokienko, 1999; Oparina, 2023). Representing “condensed” culturally marked information, phraseological units are a verbal-mental means of conceptualizing the world and reflect archetypal forms of its perception and modeling, the most ancient mythological, mythopoetic representations and sociocultural prescriptions (Kovshova, 2008: 65; Bochina, Adamka, 2015; Shulezhkova, Kostina, 2020).

Russian linguistics studies the mechanisms of interaction between linguistic and cultural signs through the figurative foundations of phraseological units as a means of representing various cultural codes (Kovshova, 2012; Zykova, 2015; Diadechko, Wang, 2022). Being a cultural sign, a phraseological unit refers to a broad cultural-historical knowledge associated with the realities behind the phraseological image: everyday life, ceremonies and rituals, myths, religion, history, literature, science, etc. Those “symbolic” phenomena, which contain cultural-historical information and allow reconstructing the historical-cultural context behind the formation and semantic evolution of set expressions include divination.

Divination is a ritual aimed at establishing contact with supernatural forces in order to gain knowledge about the future². This multi-coded cultural phenomenon became an integral part in the Slavs' pagan worship, as well as in other spheres of their daily life. Divination was mostly focused on obtaining information about vital aspects of life: marital and family relationships, well-being, health — and on predicting future events which determine a person's fate. Various methods of divination are described in ancient written sources about the Slavs and in Slavic literary texts specifically intended for predicting the future: “The Chronicles of Ancient Rus contain numerous descriptions of divination as part of social life. <...>

¹ Maslova, V. A. (2001). *Linguaculturology*. Moscow: Academiya Publ. (In Russ.).

² Tolstoy, N. I. (Ed.) (1995). *Slavic Antiquities: An Ethnolinguistic Dictionary*. In 5 vol. Vol. 1. Moscow: Mezhdunarodnye otnosheniya publ. P. 482. (In Russ.).

The chronicles explicitly refer to it, when divination is shown as a social process; and they refer to it implicitly, when the procedure and attributes of this ritual are described” (Kozlovsky, 2013: 10). Its inclusion in the sacred and everyday spheres makes divination an important source for studying both the spiritual and everyday state of society.

The semiotic domain of divination is a productive source for phraseologization: a significant number of set expressions are formed on its basis and relate to a wide variety of nominative domains, which determines the relevance of further comprehensive research into this phenomenon. It seems important to systematize phraseological units according to the types of divination, identify their semantic features, and determine their role in reflecting the cultural values and beliefs of language speakers. The relevance of the issue is also determined by the analysis of scholarly sources: there are linguistic studies on divination (Sayenko, Petlevannaya, 2006; Konovalova, 2021; Svetkina, 2023, etc.), but a systematic and typological study of phraseological units derived from divination has not been conducted yet.

The aim of the study is to identify and systematize Russian phraseological units which originate from divination and to determine their semantic features in the cultural and historical context.

Methods and Materials

The research material is a corpus of phraseological units related to divination, which have been extracted from dictionaries edited by A.K. Birikh, V.M. Mokienko, L.I. Stepanova³, and V.N. Telia⁴. Specialized ethnolinguistic dictionaries⁵, folklore and ethnographic collections⁶, monographs, and scientific articles on the history of divination⁷ were used as additional sources.

The objectives set in this study and the choice of theoretical approach necessitate the use of scientific research methods: the comprehensive sampling method, the analytical-descriptive method (observation, interpretation, and generalization), the historical-etymological method, the method of semantic analysis, and the method of cultural commentary.

³ Birich, A. K., & Mokienko, V. M., & Stepanova, L. I. (1998). *Dictionary of Russian Phraseology. Historical and Etymological Reference Book*. Saint Petersburg: Folio-Press. P. 704. (In Russ.).

⁴ Telia, V. N. (Ed.) (2024). *The Great Phraseological Dictionary of the Russian Language. Meaning. Usage. Cultural Commentary*. Moscow: AST-PRESS SCHOOL. (In Russ.).

⁵ Tolstoy, N. I. (Ed.) (1995). *Slavic Antiquities: An Ethnolinguistic Dictionary*. In 5 vol. Vol. 1. Moscow: Mezhdunarodnye otnosheniya publ. P. 482. (In Russ.).

⁶ Sakharov, I. P. (2013). *Tales of the Russian people*. Vol. 1. Moscow: Institut Russkoi Tsvivilizatsii. (In Russ.). Maksimov, S. V. (1955) *Winged Words*. Moscow: Gosudartvennoe izdatelstvo hudozhestvennoi literatury Publ. (In Russ.).

⁷ Wiggzell, F. V. (1997). Sketches of Russian Life in the 18th and 19th Centuries: Fortune-Tellers and Their Listeners. *Russian History*, (1), 159–167. (In Russ.). Shevtsov, V. V. (2005). *Card Games in Russia (Late 16th — Early 20th Centuries): The History of Games and the History of Society*. Tomsk: Tomsk State University. (In Russ.).

Results

The semiotic field of divination is a productive source of phraseologization; it forms a significant layer of units with ethnocultural information. The article demonstrates that phraseological units reflecting various methods of predicting the future follow certain patterns: ethnocultural beliefs and ideas and the knowledge of various magical action-oriented practices reflected in divination play a decisive role in the formation of the semantics of set expressions.

The authors found that the motivation for the cultural-linguistic meaning of phraseological units is determined by the symbolic semantics of their components, which correspond to the mythological worldview, and by the cultural representations and codes characteristic of that worldview. The classification of set expressions by types of divination (hydromancy, divination by beans, cleromancy, astrology, divination by riddle, tasseography, chiromancy, cartomancy, crystallogomancy) reveals their typological diversity.

It has been established that the key phraseologization mechanism is the desacralization of the image, where magical action is projected onto cognitive and ethical categories. This transformation is based on the binary opposition “sacred–profane,” which combines emotionally and evaluatively charged components in the semantics of these idioms. The trope-based interpretation of set expressions, encompassing the semantic spheres of uncertainty and doubt, manipulation and deception, providence and clarity, fate and destiny, plays a crucial role in preserving and transmitting the cultural and historical experience of a nation.

Discussion

The lexicographical definition of the word “divination” in the Russian language contains both denotative and connotative components, including those of an ethnocultural nature, and reflects background sacred knowledge about Slavonic mythological-ritual practices. Modern Russian language has a representative group of idioms whose genetic basis and figurative structure are determined by historically established divination.

As part of this study, phraseological units were classified according to types of divination, and the specific features of their linguistic and cultural coding were identified.

I. Phraseological units derived from divination by beans

The Russian language contains a number of phraseological units whose internal form traces back to bean divination, a practice known in Eastern Europe: *здать на бобах* (lit. to divine with beans) ‘to make groundless assumptions’; *бобы разводить* (lit. to scatter beans) ‘disapprovingly: to engage in idle gossip, to procrastinate, to dwell on trifles’; *на бобах провести* (lit. to deceive someone with

beans) ‘to deceive someone, to act dishonestly or unfairly toward someone’⁸. These idioms originate from an ancient Slavic magical ritual where beans were the primary divination tool and incantation word. The nominal component “beans” in these idioms corresponds to the plant cultural code. In addition to divination, the seeds of these plants are known for their use in fertility magic, folk medicine, and as ritual food in Slavic memorial and calendar rites⁹. Bean divination is associated with the Byzantine tradition; its methods include grabbing beans in a handful, scattering them in small piles followed by counting, arranging them on a table according to a specific system, tossing them, etc. This form of divination was used to identify those responsible for curse or theft, as well as to learn about the future harvest, marriage, life, and death.

According to S.P. Mordovina and A.L. Stanislavsky, bean divination was first mentioned in Russian texts in 1650. The documentary evidence allows scholars to establish a connection between this type of divination and the divination with bones, which had been widespread since the 15th century. Researchers note that descriptions of these divination types contain set expressions such as *разводить костями* (lit. to divine with bones) — *бобами разводить* (lit. to divine with beans), *ворожить на костях, костями* (lit. to divine with bones) — *ворожить на бобах, бобами* (lit. to divine with beans), which are repeatedly used in various forms and have the common meaning ‘to divine with bones’. The divination used six-sided dice. Their flat sides had the carved dots; due to their similar form, these dots were called “grains” or “beans” (*boba* and *baba* from Proto-Slavic *bobъ* “something round”); the dice themselves also received a similar name. Later, divination with real beans emerged, having nothing in common with “bone divination” (Mordovina, Stanislavsky, 1982: 323–325).

The idiomatic expressions *гадать на бобах* ‘to divine with beans’, *бобы разводить* ‘to lay out beans’; *на бобах провесту* ‘to deceive with beans’ trace back to the most ancient form of world perception, fetishism, which views inanimate objects as supernatural entities with magical power. The imagery of these idiomatic expressions is also associated with the folkloric interpretation of the main divination tool as a mediator between people and the supernatural world, a bearer of information about future events. For example, N.N. Podosokorsky notes that “in Vladimir Dal’s *Russian Fairy Tales*, the devil — apprentice Sidor Polikarpovich was referred to as *Царь Горох* ‘King Pea’; for his misdeeds, Satan sent him to earth to confuse people and pry out their secrets,” “beans <...> often open a path to another dimension” (Podosokorsky, 2023: 68).

⁸ Birich, A. K., & Mokienko, V. M., & Stepanova, L. I. (1998). *Dictionary of Russian Phraseology. Historical and Etymological Reference Book*. Saint Petersburg: Folio-Press. P. 51. (In Russ.).

⁹ Tolstoy, N. I. (Ed.) (1995). *Slavic Antiquities: An Ethnolinguistic Dictionary*. In 5 vol. Vol. 1. Moscow: Mezhdunarodnye otnosheniya publ. P. 201. (In Russ.).

Despite the interest in divination among both the common people and the high society in Russia, in the 15th–16th centuries, paganism was classified as state crime and was punished for by law. However, in the times of Peter I and the Enlightenment, belief in divination slowly disappeared and lost its sacred significance. The unreliable divination predictions prevented people from believing in divination, which was reflected in the pejorative evaluative component in the meanings of many idiomatic expressions and the desacralization of ritual practices. For example, the image of the idiom *гадать на бобах* (lit. to tell fortunes with beans) is created by a metaphor which relates the use of beans in divination to an unreliable method of forecasting future events without objective or scientific basis. The phraseological unit *бобы разводит* (lit. to scatter beans) is based on a metaphorical reinterpretation of the divination as an action without pragmatic value similar to meaningless communication. According to V.V. Vinogradov, the idiomatic unit *бобы разводит* (lit. to scatter beans) gave rise to the colloquial, humorous meaning of the words *разводит* — *развести* ‘to initiate or say something stupid, tedious, and boring’ (e.g., *развести чепуху* ‘to talk nonsense’, *развести канитель* ‘to start rigmarole’) (Vinogradov, 1994: 245). The phraseological unit *на бобах провести (кого)* (lit. to deceive somebody with beans) conveys a stereotypical notion of a socio-communicative act, a deceptive action evaluated negatively. The semantic structure of the units under study contains a stable pejorative connotation, which arose because of the divination desacralization. The magical act lost its sacred status and came to be interpreted in terms of destructive social behavior. Thus, the idioms of this group convey the speakers’ skeptical attitude toward irrational methods of cognition and the meanings of groundlessness, idle talk, and deception.

II. *Phraseological units derived from cleromancy (divination by drawing of lots)*

One of the idioms associated with the most ancient divination rituals is *бросать (метать, кидать) жребий* (lit. to cast (throw, toss) lots) ‘to draw lots to make a decision’¹⁰. The component “lot” in this phraseological unit corresponds to the religious artifact cultural code, while the component “to cast” corresponds to the anthropic cultural code. The nominal component “lot” denotes a symbolic object drawn or cast to randomly determine one of several possible options. The verbal component “to cast” denotes a ritual action used in numerous forms of divination to establish contact with the otherworld; it reflects the process of making a choice¹¹.

¹⁰ Birich, A. K., & Mokienko, V. M., & Stepanova, L. I. (1998). *Dictionary of Russian Phraseology. Historical and Etymological Reference Book*. Saint Petersburg: Folio-Press. P. 191. (In Russ.).

¹¹ Tolstoy, N. I. (Ed.) (1995). *Slavic Antiquities: An Ethnolinguistic Dictionary*. In 5 vol. Vol. 1. Moscow: Mezhdunarodnye otnosheniya publ. (In Russ.).

Divination is an external factor determining the behavior of a person who refuses to make an independent choice and obeys the predictions received.

The idiom *бросать (метать, кидать) жребий* traces back to the Indo-European custom of determining fate and the will of an omniscient deity by lot. References to casting lots are found in the writings of Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus (10th century) and in the chronicles of Thitmar of Merseburg (11th century). The latter emphasized the significance of sacred acts in the public life of the Slavs, noted the public nature of the pagan ritual conducted to resolve doubts, determine sacrifices pleasant for the gods, and ascertain the will of the gods to achieve unanimity (Kozlovsky, 2013: 11). Being the highest authority in making complex decisions, divination by lot was a universal means of social regulation; it was used to distribute property, select candidates to perform duties, and to predict the future.

The transition from paganism to Christianity led to a semantic shift in the divination ritual, which came to be interpreted not as a manifestation of pagan forces, but as God's providence, a "sign" of God's will. The Holy Scriptures refer to the adoption of God-pleasing decisions through the casting of lots; this is how the apostles and patriarchs were chosen. This fact explains the absence of a pronounced negative connotation in the phrase under consideration, which is based on a belief in fate and divine providence. Furthermore, unlike other forms of divination (using beans, coffee grounds, etc.), where the result was interpreted by the diviner and depended on their opinion, the process of casting lots implied an unambiguous and direct answer and reflected the objectivity of the chance and the acceptance of the result as predestined from above.

The idiom *бросать (метать, кидать) жребий* has lost its direct connection to ritual divination but has retained a cultural connotation of uncertainty and chance. The heart of this idiom is a predestination metaphor, where the lot is symbolically linked to forces independent of human will and determining future events. In general, the phrase is associated with a stereotypical notion of random selection based on chance. The semantics of the phrase may reflect a belief in predestination, a higher power behind the outcome of the lot, driven by a reluctance to take responsibility for decision.

III. *Phraseological units derived from hydromancy (Divination by Water)*

The origin of the idiom *как в воду глядел* (lit. if somebody saw it in the water) referring to a person who foresaw or accurately predicted something is linked to the archaic divination by water, hydromancy¹². In Slavic beliefs, water is a multifaceted symbol, the primal cosmogonic element, a source of life force and healing,

¹² Birich, A. K., & Mokienko, V. M., & Stepanova, L. I. (1998). *Dictionary of Russian Phraseology. Historical and Etymological Reference Book*. Saint Petersburg: Folio-Press. P. 88, 90–91. (In Russ.).

a boundary between worlds, and an instrument for magical rituals (chanting over water, ritual ablutions, throwing offerings into water, praying at springs, etc.). The idiomatic phrase under consideration reflects national beliefs in the predictive power of water and directly refers to divination when the future was determined by gazing at the surface of the water. In this case, the component “water” functions as a metaphorical instrument of foresight. According to M.L. Kovshova, water here is identified with a mirror due to its property of reflecting the “world beyond the mirror” (Kovshova, 2008: 64).

IV. *Phraseological units derived from astrology (divination by celestial bodies)*

Beliefs about the influence of celestial bodies on human destiny in astrology are also reflected in Russian phraseological units. The set expression *счастливая планета выпала* (lit. a lucky constellation has fallen) archaic, jokingly ‘someone has been very lucky’¹³ traces back to horoscope divination, which determines a person’s fate based on the positions of the planets and stars at the moment of their birth.

Astrological literature appeared in Russia in the 11th–12th centuries along with translated texts, and in the 11th–15th centuries, the high society and some Russian scholars showed an interest in astrology. I.A. Gerasimova notes predictive and divinatory everyday practices (“Lunniki,” “Kolyadniki,” “Gromniki” of the 11th–15th centuries) in her work: “In the Lunniki, behavioral strategies were adapted both to the constantly changing appearance of the celestial body, to the calendar, and accordingly to the Zodiac signs” (Gerasimova, 2013: 104, 106). Astral and cosmogonic myths interpreted the sky as the absolute embodiment of the “heavenly realm”, a category having incomprehensibility, grandeur, and superiority over the earthly realm; in this cosmology, human life was viewed as an element of a general system, determined by the positions of its other components¹⁴. Official Church condemned astrology as pagan superstition; however, astrological knowledge, particularly regarding the zodiacal circle and the influence of celestial bodies on human activity, was reflected in apocryphal literature. Astrological ideas influenced phraseologization and created set expressions which are used in modern literary language (*родиться под счастливой звездой* ‘to be born under a lucky star’, *звезда возшла* ‘a star has risen’, etc.)¹⁵. Astrology operates with images of celestial bodies, which have traditionally been associated with a higher order and

¹³ Birich, A. K., & Mokienko, V. M., & Stepanova, L. I. (1998). *Dictionary of Russian Phraseology. Historical and Etymological Reference Book*. Saint Petersburg: Folio-Press. P. 449. (In Russ.).

¹⁴ Telia, V. N. (Ed.) (2024). *The Great Phraseological Dictionary of the Russian Language. Meaning. Usage. Cultural Commentary*. Moscow: AST-PRESS SCHOOL. P. 784. (In Russ.).

¹⁵ Telia, V. N. (Ed.) (2024). *The Great Phraseological Dictionary of the Russian Language. Meaning. Usage. Cultural Commentary*. Moscow: AST-PRESS SCHOOL. P. 586–587. (In Russ.).

a potentially beneficial influence on human life. Phraseologization established the positive aspect of astrological “prediction”, the idea that a person can be “chosen” by fate, which corresponds to the concepts of luck and good fortune.

The component of the phraseological unit *планида* (colloquial, archaic ‘planet’) corresponds to the cosmic cultural code; the position of a celestial body is interpreted, according to astrological beliefs, as influencing the person’s life events. The word *planida* is a colloquial variant of the word *planet*, which was borrowed through Polish from the Latin *planeta* ‘celestial body’ and later acquired the meaning ‘fate’. The component “happy” in the phrase corresponds to the anthropic cultural code; in Slavic languages, “happiness” originally meant “a good or a favourable fate.” This component reinforces the emotional and evaluative aspect of the idiom, emphasizes the positive meaning of the event being described and indicates a favorable outcome. The verbal component of the idiom “to fall out” underlines the randomness of the event, which does not depend on the person themselves but arises spontaneously, by chance, fate, or other external forces. The idiom conveys a stereotypical view of fate as an external force that influences a person’s life, regardless of their efforts and will.

V. *Phraseological units derived from coxinomancy (fortune-telling by sieve)*

The idiom *чудеса в решете* “miracles in a sieve” (jokingly ‘something amazing, incredible, striking in its unusualness’)¹⁶ traces back to coxinomancy, which in medieval Europe and Arabia was used to expose thieves. As V.M. Mokienko notes, in Russia in 16th–18th-century this practice transformed into market charlatanism: fortune-tellers would shake legume seeds in a sieve and, seeking to make a profit, promise unsuspecting people unprecedented wealth and good fortune (Mokienko, 1999: 413–414). The people’s ironic attitude toward such predictions gave rise to a set expression that mocks implausible stories. The phrase demonstrates a contrasting combination of cultural codes: the everyday element of the sieve desacralizes the image of a miracle, transforming it into a symbol of implausibility and absurdity in a specific historical and everyday context.

VI. *Phraseological units derived from tasseography (divination by coffee ground)*

Predicting the future by coffee ground is reflected in the idiom *гадать на кофейной гуще* literally ‘to read coffee grounds’ (‘to make baseless assumptions, guesses, or speculations’)¹⁷. The phrase traces back to a form of divination originated in the Ottoman era and — interpreting the future based on the form of coffee grounds at the bottom of a cup. The idiom is a calque from French *lire dans le marc de café*, and vocabularies give it the connotative labels “ironical”, “disapproving”. In Russia,

¹⁶ Birich, A. K., & Mokienko, V. M., & Stepanova, L. I. (1998). *Dictionary of Russian Phraseology. Historical and Etymological Reference Book*. Saint Petersburg: Folio-Press. P. 629. (In Russ.).

¹⁷ Там же. P. 143. (In Russ.).

fortune-telling by coffee grounds emerged with the arrival of coffee in the 17th century and was considered “less reprehensible than methods of divination by lots and beans” (Bogdanov, 2006: 64). In the time of Catherine II, attitudes toward such crimes became less severe; the first books on fortune-telling were published, and fortune-tellers by coffee grounds were referred to in Russian journals and literature. The Dictionary of the Russian Academy of Sciences gives two meanings for the word *кофейница*, and one of them refers to a woman who interprets the future based on traces of coffee ground in the cup¹⁸. Explanatory dictionaries of the Russian language classify this meaning as obsolete¹⁹. The fact that language actualized this idiomatic image reflects a critical attitude toward the ritual’s predictive value; the chaotic pattern of coffee grounds becomes a metaphor for the lack of logical basis in human assumptions.

VII. *Phraseological units derived from palmistry (divination based on the lines and mounds on the palms)*

Russian phraseological expressions also reflect palmistry, a practice of predicting a person’s fate based on the lines and mounds of their palm. The art of palm reading has a centuries-long history as confirmed by historical sources of various cultures. In Russia, this divination practice, as noted by E. Ostrogorsky and A. Shlykov, appeared in the 18th century; it is evidenced by printed publications and handwritten translations of Western works on palmistry (Ostrogorsky, Shlykov, 2022). In the 19th century, there was a rise in publications on this topic, including printed works by Russian authors. It was a significant event when A. Debarrol’s work “The Secrets of the Hand”, which influenced European palmistry, was published in Russian. The lexical units *хиромантия* ‘palmistry’, *рукогадание* ‘hand divination,’ *рукогадатель* ‘palm reader,’ and *рукогадательница* ‘female palm reader’ were recorded in V.I. Dal’s “Explanatory Dictionary of the Living Great Russian Language” as associated with Gypsies: *ворожат на руку* ‘tell fortunes by the hand’, *по-цыгански* ‘in the Gypsy manner’²⁰. The greatest interest in this divination practice in Russia is recorded at the beginning of the 20th century.

The origin of the idiom *как на ладони* literally *as if seen on the palm* ‘something that is clearly visible or perfectly obvious’²¹ is associated with palmistry. Hand has long held magical significance, was an important element of the semiotic system, and was associated with the concept of fate in mythological consciousness (cf. the Indo-European root *bhag- meant “fate” and “hand”). In the practice of fortune-telling, a

¹⁸ *Dictionary of the Russian Academy of Sciences*. (1792). Vol. 3. Saint Petersburg: Imperial Academy of Sciences. (In Russ.).

¹⁹ Ushakov, D. N. (Ed.) (1935–1940). *Explanatory dictionary of the Russian language*, Moscow: Sovetskaya Entsiklopedia Publ. (In Russ.).

²⁰ Dal, V. I. (1998). *Explanatory dictionary of the living Great Russian language*. In 4 vol. Moscow: Russkii Yazyk Publ. (In Russ.).

²¹ Birich, A. K., & Mokienko, V. M., & Stepanova, L. I. (1998). *Dictionary of Russian Phraseology. Historical and Etymological Reference Book*. Saint Petersburg: Folio-Press. P. 329. (In Russ.).

palm with distinct lines symbolizes a clear picture of fate. The idiom in question metaphorically describes a situation of extreme clarity and predictability, analogous to a palm reader's interpretation of fate based on the palm lines.

VIII. *Phraseological units derived from cartomancy (fortune-telling by cards)*

The following set expressions are also genetically linked to fortune-telling: *пиковое положение* literally *spades position*, *быть (оказаться, очутиться) в пиковом положении* literally *to be (find oneself, end up) in a spades position* 'to be in a difficult, unpleasant situation', *оставаться / остаться при пиковом интересе* literally *to remain / stay in spades interest* ironically 'to be left with nothing; to suffer a complete failure'²². These set expressions are linked to cartomancy, a predictive practice using a deck of cards. Fortune-telling with cards arose in France and Germany in the mid-18th century and spread to the Russian Empire by the end of the century. Cartomancy boomed at the beginning of the 19th century and was marked by clear sociocultural differentiation. This practice spread among the nobility, and later among merchants and the bourgeoisie, contrasted with the attitude of the peasantry, thinking of it as an "urban" method of divination, more complex compared to everyday techniques²³.

Cartomancy is mainly verbalized through idioms associated to spades, one of the four main suits in a deck of cards. Set expressions such as *пиковое положение*, *быть (оказаться, очутиться) в пиковом положении*, *оставаться / остаться при пиковом интересе* have negative prognostic semantics and stem from the symbolism of the spades, a harbinger of unfavourable events and negative outcomes. It is noteworthy that idioms derived from cartomancy, compared to units representing other divination practices, explicitly refer not so much to the ritual itself as to the subject's position after the ritual. In this context, the spade suit acts as a metaphorical representative of failure, loss, and ruin and projects the result of the divination practice onto a real-life situation.

Another phraseological unit related to the conceptual domains of fortune-telling and gambling is *смешивать / смешать карты* literally *to shuffle the cards* 'to disrupt someone's schemes or plans through an unexpected and abrupt intervention or decisive actions'²⁴. The component "to shuffle" corresponds to the anthropic cultural code and reflects an integral element of cartomancy, the process of shuffling the deck. The component "cards" corresponds to the artifact-material cultural code and denotes an attribute of fortune-telling. The idiom is a semi-calque of the French equivalent *brouiller les cartes*, which originated in the speech of

²² Birich, A. K., & Mokienko, V. M., & Stepanova, L. I. (1998). *Dictionary of Russian Phraseology. Historical and Etymological Reference Book*. Saint Petersburg: Folio-Press. P. 233, 253. (In Russ.).

²³ Sakharov, I. P. (2013). *Tales of the Russian people*. Vol. 1. Moscow: Institut Russkoi Tsivilizatsii Publ. P. 275. (In Russ.).

²⁴ Birich, A. K., & Mokienko, V. M., & Stepanova, L. I. (1998). *Dictionary of Russian Phraseology. Historical and Etymological Reference Book*. Saint Petersburg: Folio-Press. (In Russ.).

fortune-tellers and card players and has been used in Russian since the 19th century. The idiom conveys a stereotypical notion of a sudden action that prevents someone from achieving their goal, or unforeseen circumstances that hinder plan realization. Unlike idioms which represent the passive reception of information about one's fate, this phrase focuses on the possibility to actively influence it and shifts the semantic emphasis from prediction to the pragmatic disruption of events planned by a person.

Conclusion

Being an integral component of a national linguistic culture, phraseology is a unique linguistic heritage which reflects the sociocultural context, historical realities, and mythological and religious beliefs shaping national identity. Divination as a multi-coded cultural phenomenon is a rich foundation for phraseologization, and a corpus of phraseological units emerged from divination practices. The types of phraseological units identified in this study reflect the diversity of set expressions associated with divination, a wide range of divination techniques, and the attitude of native speakers toward the process of divination and its results. The compositional structure of the phraseological units captures divination methods, attributes, and tools used in the ritual. Idioms which have lost their direct connection to the ritual indicate a decline in the significance of divination within the sociocultural context; at the same time, divinatory images after trope-based reinterpretation are preserved in the language system and function in various semantic domains. Idioms of this type are deeply connected with mythological thinking and archaic notions of fate and predestination, which determine the transformation of people's attitude toward divination practices and indicate a re-evaluation of divination as a cultural phenomenon.

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Научная статья

**Фразеологические единицы русского языка,
связанные с гаданиями:
культурно-историческая детерминированность**

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Аннотация. Антропоцентрический характер современной лингвистической парадигмы, в контексте которой фразеологические единицы рассматриваются как средства кумуляции и трансляции этнической культуры, репрезентирующие коллективный опыт и ментальные установки лингвокультурного сообщества, обусловил актуальность данного исследования. Особый интерес представляет изучение фразеологизмов, генетически связанных с архаичными формами духовной культуры, в частности с гадательными практиками. Цель исследования — выявить и систематизировать фразеологизмы русского языка, связанные с гаданиями, определить их семантические особенности с учетом культурно-исторического контекста. В качестве материала исследования взяты данные специализированных фразеологических и этнолингвистических словарей, фольклорно-этнографических сборников, монографий и научных статей по истории ритуалов гадания. Применены следующие методы исследования: сплошная выборка, описательный, историко-этимологический, семантический анализа, культурный комментарий и др. Рассмотрены этимологические особенности фразеологизмов данного типа, описана их семантика, выявлены внутренняя форма и образная составляющая, показана национально-культурная специфика, обусловленная культурной детерминированностью фразеологических образов. Выявление этнокультурного своеобразия фразеологизмов реализуется посредством применения лингвокультурологического анализа, позволяющего учитывать семантическую периферию оборота, не входящую в традиционную словарную дефиницию и связанную с экстралингвистической действительностью. Установлено, что русские

фразеологические единицы, восходящие к гаданиям, являются особыми ономаσιологическими знаками, обладающими культурно-национальной значимостью и сохраняющими в себе важные элементы культурного кода нации. Проведенный анализ демонстрирует, что семантика фразеологизмов детерминирована соответствующим историческим периодом и отражает магически-ритуальные практики, оставившие след во внутренней форме фразеологических оборотов. Сделаны выводы: исследование происхождения и дальнейшего функционирования устойчивых единиц раскрывает их роль как лингвокультурного феномена, аккумулирующего архаичное сознание, этнокультурные стереотипы и историческую память носителей языка; систематизация фразеологизмов по различным видам гадательных практик позволяет классифицировать их типологическое разнообразие. Дальнейшие перспективы изучения фразеологических единиц, связанных с гаданиями, видятся в возможности исследования когнитивных механизмов их формирования и функционирования, включая анализ метафорических и метонимических моделей, лежащих в их основе.

Ключевые слова: фразеология, лингвокультурология, семантика, культурная коннотация, коды культуры, обряд гадания

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