

On pejorative expressions in Finno-Ugric languages

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The extensive dictionaries of most Finno-Ugric languages offer a fairly representative collection of idioms, proverbs, word parses, sayings, similes, metaphors, etc. taken from dialects and fiction. Such a small tradition is something that is learned in early childhood at home in the family circle. If the transfer of the language is interrupted, this topic will remain narrow, even if the language is learned later. Negative emotional expressions and sexual vocabulary are, however, an area that is quite inadequately noted down, especially in newer dictionaries printed in Russia. This subject can be found to some extent in the folkloristic fieldwork materials of the 19th century.

For the time being, I have based my research on Komi researcher Cypanov's pioneering dictionary from 2021 presenting the pejorative lexicon of the Komi language. In it, he interestingly notes that swearwords in Komi are mostly Russian loans. The first group consists of those basic words whose primary, pejorative meaning is the most central, such as Komi *йöй* 'crazy', *бöб* 'stupid', *дышпоз* 'lazybones' (< *поз* 'nest'), *мöмöм* 'stutterer'. This group contains many words borrowed from Russia, such as *зad* 'scoundrel, worm', *плут* 'scoundrel', *сука* 'bitch', *хам* 'nerd, scruff'.

The second group consists of such expletives that were born from nouns but received an additional pejorative meaning. They can be further divided semantically into six groups. I have combined some suitable words I found in other related languages into these groups.

1. Body parts and their secretions: *сiм дук* 'the smell of shit' > 'insignificant, worthless person', *манян* 'female genitalia' > 'despicable person', *квaйт чуня* 'six-fingered' > 'thief'. In Erzya, 'fool' is *чувтонь* / *чаво* / *ватраки пря* (< 'tree, empty, frog' + 'head'). In Northern Sami *baika* 'excrement, poop, shit' > 'an idle person', *rusku* 'ass', the milder word *bahta* 'bottom' is often used in various sayings.
2. Household goods, clothes: *нямöд* 'a strip of fabric around the leg' > 'unwilling, wretched', *нöш* 'wooden hammer' > 'fool, blockhead, mallet', *кыз бурня* 'fat large storage container' > 'fatty', *киссьöм тюни* 'worn felt slipper' > 'useless human', *дыш парка* 'lazy coat' > 'lazybones'. In Northern Sami, *ráigereŋko* 'hole chair (for

walking a small child)' > 'sloppy mouth', *gurci* 'too deep object (dish, etc.); bad ahkio / boat' > 'gosh'.

3. Animals, birds, insects: *камша* 'magpie' > 'gossiping woman', *рака* 'crow' > 'troublemaker, mischief maker', *порсь* 'pig' > 'messy, unclean human', *ош* 'bear' > 'uncivilized, rude', *синтӧм гым* 'blind fly' > 'intruder, shameless person', *кык кока пон* 'two-legged dog' > 'bad person'. Erzya *баран* 'ram' > 'stubborn person', *инегуй* 'big snake' > 'nasty person'. Northern Sámi *njir'ru* 'female reindeer that is difficult to handle' > 'nagging, spooked woman'.
4. Plants, fungi and their parts: *кын мыр* 'frozen stump' > 'fool, stupid, heartless person', *кӧчамач* 'puffball' > 'bugger, worthless person'. Northern Sámi *darfeboallu* 'turf ball' > 'idiot'.
5. Ethnonyms: *чудь* 'Chudian' > 'gloomy, silent, withdrawing person', *чуваши* 'Chuvash' > 'fearful, timid', *кизьтӧм яран* 'unbuttoned Nenets' > 'walker with open jacket', *лӓзь вогыль* 'fluffy-headed Mansi' > 'fuzzy, raggedy'. Northern Sámi *rivgu* means 'non-Sámi woman' < 'stick, pole'.
6. Mythological, including many euphemisms: *мор* 'plague' > 'devil; swear word', *омӧль* 'bad, evil, unworthy' > 'devil', *кузь* 'tall' > 'forest spirit, devil', *куш-пель* 'bald-eared' > 'devil', *куль* 'water spirit'. This is an abusive word used by women for their men, which is also known from Northern Khanty in the sense of 'forest spirit'. Many words meaning 'devil' are known from Erzya: *шайтян*, *дявол*, *идемевсь*, *чонача*, the last of which also means 'ghost'. Northern Sami has at least the following 'devil' words *beargalat*, *biro*, *birovuoras*, *hiida*, *õinnolaš*, *ruolla ~ truolla*.

Main sources

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Davvi girji