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The Axiosphere of the Mari Epic Consciousness Based on the Materials of the Heroic Epic “Yugorno. The Song of the Prophetic Path”

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Abstract. The paper is devoted to the study of the cosmogonic narratives of the Mari people with a projection on the problem of epic consciousness. The purpose of the study is to recreate the value choice of epic heroes through the interaction of the axiological dominants of the Mari ethnic world based on the materials of A. Spiridonov’s poetic creation “Yugorno. A song about the prophetic path.” The novelty of the work lies in the fact that, against the background of studying the ethnological aspects of the formation of the axiological paradigm of Mari literature, the problem of reconstructing the axiosphere of the Mari epic is actualised, which is defined as the space of existence of spiritual, physical, mental, emotional factors of the formation of the Mari world. This approach is fundamentally new not only for Mari, but also for the entire Finno-Ugric literary criticism. The existing Russian research experience accumulated by representatives of various scientific fields contains elements of axiological analysis of traditional epic texts. Focusing on the theoretical and methodological foundations of such studies allows us to assert that a necessary condition for effective cultural transmission of values is to identify the content of the axiological dominants of traditional folk culture, to study both the host and nurturing, as well as the ethno-cultural landscape.

Key words: the axiosphere, epic consciousness, the Mari heroic epic, “Yugorno. The Song of the prophetic path,” axiological dominants, ethnocultural landscape, ethnomir

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Аксиосфера марийского эпического сознания по материалам героического эпоса «Югорно. Песнь о вещем пути»

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Аннотация. Исследование посвящено изучению космогонических нарративов народа мари с проекцией на проблему эпического сознания. Цель исследования — воссоздание ценностного выбора эпических героев через взаимодействие аксиологических доминант марийского этномира по материалам поэтического творения А. Спиридонова «Югорно. Песнь о вещем пути». Новизна работы заключается в том, что на фоне изучения этноценностных аспектов формирования аксиологической парадигмы марийской литературы актуализируется проблема реконструкции аксиосферы марийской эпики, что определяется как пространство существования духовных, физических, ментальных и эмоциональных факторов формирования марийского мира. Такой подход является принципиально новым не только для марийского, но и всего финно-угорского литературоведения. Существующий российский исследовательский опыт, накопленный представителями различных научных направлений, содержит элементы аксиологического анализа традиционных эпических текстов. Ориентация на теоретико-методологические основы таких исследований позволяет утверждать, что необходимым условием эффективной культурной трансмиссии ценностей является выявление содержания аксиологических доминант традиционной народной культуры, изучение как вмещающего и кормящего, так и этнокультурного ландшафта.

Ключевые слова: аксиосфера, эпическое сознание, марийский героический эпос, «Югорно. Песнь о вещем пути», аксиологические доминанты, этнокультурный ландшафт, этномир

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Introduction

One of the fundamental properties of culture is its axiosphere (from Greek *ἀξία* — value) in the meaning of such a spiritual formation, which includes value orientations that provide self-preservation and development of a person. Axiosphere is objective space of existence of spiritual, physical, mental, emotional factors. The relevance of the systemic study of axiological dominants of the Mari ethnoworld is determined by the study of the value nature of ethnonarratives, historically developed and functioning in the mentality of Mari culture. This work is aimed at revealing the systemic unity of values of Mari epic consciousness.

The problem of axiosphere has attracted the attention of minds since the times of Aristotle, who saw the task of philosophy in ‘comprehending by the mind of

things that are by nature the most valuable' and believed that a heroic, 'great' man should die for something especially valuable [1. P. 179]. I. Kant wrote that true value is 'an end in itself, not a means to an end' and 'this end cannot be replaced by any other end' [2. P. 269]. In the XX century, new aspects of axiology were discussed in connection with psychological, philological, ethnographic research (M. Rokic et al.) [3]. I.A. Ilyin, N.A. Berdyaev, N.O. Lossky and many others wrote about the values realized in the history and culture of the Russian people. Separate values of the Russian heroic epic were studied in the works of A.N. Veselovsky [4], V.M. Zhirmunsky [5], D.S. Likhachev [6] and other authors. Important, in our opinion, is the fact that since the middle of the 19th century researchers of epic texts have distinguished such concepts as 'folk ideal', 'folk character', 'worldview', and in the 20th–21st centuries the terms 'mentality', 'value field' of culture, 'sum of representations about the world', 'axiologically oriented picture of the world', 'epic picture of the world' appear. Scientists who study the language and semiotics of folklore, who use oral folk art in their works, more and more often resort to the study of values of traditional culture, because folklore points to the oldest way of comprehending the surrounding reality, teaches to think with conceptual ideas-images, gives a person a certain character of actions in the world. As academician Yu.M. Sokolov noted, 'the early history of many peoples... we can often learn only on the basis of folklore materials' [7. P. 34].

Regarding the degree of study of the Mari heroic epic "Yugorno. Song of the Prophetic Way", let us note the works of L.A. Andreeva and O.F. Khudobina [8], A.V. Koshayev [9], N.A. Fedoseeva [10; 11].

The phenomenon of axiosphere of national culture is an independent habitat and effective functioning of those value representations that are most characteristic of a certain community. Rich cult background, customs and rituals, cultural norms and attitudes, in one word, the sum total of spiritual ethno-traditions is formed during a very long historical time. Such axiological dominants in correlation with ethnic meanings reflect the codes of Big and Small Time and condition the outline of the ethno-cultural landscape. Different types of artistic time (retrospective, modernity, their intertwining) and space (topos-archetypes, the system of modern loci) presented in the national literature express the key value orientations of the author's worldview [12].

Methods and Materials. The research is based on the hermeneutic-phenomenological approach to the study of epic texts. We used general scientific methods of analysis and synthesis with the use of problem and historical-comparativist methods, as well as semantic analysis of epic texts.

The materials of the study were A.Ya. Spiridonov's poetic creation "Yugorno. Song about the Prophetic Way" [13] and the author's field materials on the multilevel system of concepts reflecting natural, cultural, social and virtual realities of the past, present and future in the picture of the Mari ethno-world, which are reflected in the previous works of the author of this paper [14].

Results and Discussion

The language of culture has national specificity, and therefore — mental peculiarities, specificity of representation of the world, of feeding and accommodating landscape. Thanks to the activity of human beings acting as subjects of culture, an image of value and meaning reality actualised in specific images and forms is composed.

The authors of the first artistic works in the Mari language vividly portrayed the original image of the world order, the sacred heritage of the Mari people, expressively pursued the idea of harmony between Man and the Universe, in which nature is a completely and culturally organised space, an ideal abode with an eternal source of life energy. The assertion of the nature-based life and respect for the natural (traditional) faith, which formed the basis of the symbolic imagery of Sergei Chavain's first original poem "Oto" ("Grove") of the early twentieth century, has become a cross-cutting theme in Mari literature up to the present time. In general, the Mari spiritual tradition with its myths, legends and epic tales had a great influence on the formation of the value paradigm of Mari literature.

From the first poetic work in the Mari language to the full-fledged epic creation "Yugorno. Song of the Prophetic Way" by Anatoly Spiridonov almost 100 years passed. With this title the Mari heroic epic came to the readers in 2002 in two languages — Russian and Mari — in a remarkable translation into Mari by Anatoly Mokeev, who has an excellent command of ethnonarrative terminology. In original poetic creation, the scale of the author's talent and personality, his connection with the national history are undoubtedly manifested. Looking back on times of the writing, A. Spiridonov said that Mari folk songs played a great role in writing the epic: 'All eight years of work they led me, supported me, creating an unusually high and stable lyrical mood; they made me work, they prompted me, they taught me simplicity and complexity — they taught me to write in a new way for me!' [15. P. 169].

Axiological analysis of Mari epic consciousness, its value bases is impossible without ethnonarratives that have their own traditional Mari names: *тоштыен ой* (ancestral stories), *тошты илыш гыч* (from the life of ancestors), *кугезе-влакын ойышт* (stories of great-grandfathers), *коча-шамычын ойышт* (stories of grandfathers), *тошты мари шомак* (stories of ancient Mari), *тошты мары шая* (stories of old Mari). Sometimes more ancient myths exist among the people under the name: *шоя, йомак* (fairy tale). The latter term is borrowed from Turkic-speaking peoples' [16. P. 8]. Let us consider some axiological dominants from these annals.

The myth of the Heavenly spinster. The author of the epic "Yugorno" relies on the legends of the distant olden days, starting his poetic tale with the plot reverently loved by the Mari people:

'The thunder rumbles, shaking / all the air supports; / with a fiery staple / the vault of the sky to the earth / the carpenter will bind; / and into its edges will pierce / with golden points / those invisible nails, / that eternally fasten the sky / on the silver hills / behind my village. / A young spinster through the window / will throw from the clouds / silk threads of yarn to dry. / To every little blade of grass, / to every ovary and bud / milk will flow down them / and water the earth, / responding to every drop — / chap-chap-chap! — all living things / will praise this moisture. / And when the yarn dries, / will look down from the sky with a hot face / the builder of a bright world — / will open towards our people / the seven-coloured gates, / the gates of Onar / our people call them'.

Thus, the epic heroine *Jumōnūdōr* (Daughter of God) appears already on the first pages of the epic sitting on the *Кава мерже* — the Heavenly Spinner (World Axis) as a Heavenly Spinner. The epic points to the cosmos-creative function of watering the Earth by the Daughter of God not just with heavenly moisture, but with life-giving *heavenly milk*. The sound of each drop is marvellously formalised in the text — not by the sound-imitation *plop-plop*, but the triple enumeration of the Mari word *chap*, which means *glory*. The divine milk moisture is *glorified by all living things*. We express solidarity with A.T. Lipatov, the author of the Preface to the book edition of the Mari epic, who writes: 'The world depicted in the epic poem is simple and complex: full of secrets and hidden meanings, it is majestic and mysterious, and, filled with beauty, sounding and singing. Folk wisdom here is clothed in charmingly precise words-findings. The syllable is free as the native land, and spacious as life itself. The word breathes easily in the graceful, crystal melody of verse' [17. P. 4–5].

In the axiosphere of Mari epic consciousness the story of *Jumōnūdōr* occupies a special place; M.M. Bakhtin would call it a 'value centre' [18. P. 56]. Firstly, the spinning of silver thread by the heavenly Maiden symbolises the rotation of stars around Polaris, i.e. the Daughter of God is the organiser of the astral world. In the second hypostasis *Jumōnūdōr* is the heavenly Shepherdess, because her Father forms the heavenly flock (*Юмын кўтў*). If earlier the astral world consisted only in the space near the Polar Star, now new images are conceptualized and emerge: the Heavenly stable (*Юмын вўта*) and the Heavenly river (*Юмын энгер*). The Heavenly River is understood as the Milky Way — *Ош Комбо Корно* (White Goose Road). The legend says that the heavenly flocks, moving across the sky, came to the great celestial river, which was personified by the Milky Way, for watering. In the course of time *Oš Kugu Jumo* (the Bright Great God) began to send his Daughter on a silk ladder (*порсын лўнгалтыш*) to the Earth to graze his horses, cows and sheep. Consequently, now *Jumōnūdōr* participates in the rhythmisation of the cosmos, its reasonable orderliness. Everything was ready for the birth of a human being. And it happened in early spring, when at the spring (the idea of the

origin of Man from water by analogy with the idea of the creation of the Cosmos from water) the Heavenly Shepherdess met *Aūdeme* (Man), a young man named Mari, tall, blue-eyed and fair-haired. The young ones fell in love. The beautiful Daughter of God becomes the wife of the first earthly man, having received the Heavenly flock from God the Father as a dowry. Henceforth, the domestic animals become the property of the earthly woman as the mistress of the house. Thus there is a correlation between the Heavenly Maiden and the Mari bride, according to which dowry is identical to the right of property inheritance. Thanks to the cult of Jumōnūdōr, the sacral right of ownership of the Mari woman is established in the earthly tradition, and the road to the birth of the first man, and from him the clan-tribe, the domestication of animals is opened.

In her earthly life, the Daughter of God is named *Piambar*. The heroine of the epic “Yugorno” Pampalče addresses her as a sister:

‘And I asked Jumo, / the Earth, the Moon and the Sun, / Fire, Water and Wind, / the gods and Keremets, / the smallest thing I asked: / not to leave without attention / the peaceful wanderers wandering / on their lonely paths. / Piambar, the earth goddess, / patroness of women, the eldest daughter of Oš Jumo, / before her marriage a shepherdess / of her father’s countless flocks, / promised her tarwino. / I gave it to my eldest sister, / I gave it to the star spinster, / who stitches into the fabric of the heavens / the golden sparks of destinies, all girls’ jewellery’.

In the popular consciousness Piambar became an earth goddess, the patroness of Mari women, taught them to weave and spin, knit and embroider, sing and dance, raise children and love their husbands, shoot archery, play musical instruments and seven dozen other arts. The accessories of women’s costume are brought to her as a gift: dresses, headdresses, belts, jewellery, embroidered towels, etc. The great mother of the Mari people offered a way to communicate with the World, God, the Universe through embroidery, sacred grove and rituals.

However, in ethnonarratives there is also the nominal word Piambar in the meaning of prophets, messengers of God. Folklore calls Piambar the wife of *Kuruk-kugu jōng* — the Mountain Great Man (sometimes with the addition of the epithet *Ou* — White). He is regarded as an intermediary between Jumo and people, a patron and protector, a mediator between God and his community. Over time *Kuruk-kugu jōng* was honoured on a par with gods, special sacred groves were dedicated to him. The legends have preserved other names of Kuruk-kugu jōng — *Onai*, *Kukarka* (*Kugu Karka*), *Oš Pondaš* (White Beard). In particular, in the epic “Yugorno” there is a character *Onai*:

an old wizard, / A giant, a pathfinder, / was the only descendant / of the honourable Onar, / Son of Jumo and Mlandava, / after death he became a saint, / became a helper of the god — / White Mountain Giant.

The Cosmos-creating Duck. Every nation has stories about the origin of the world and man. They reveal universal symbols-archetypes [19]. They form a complete picture of the world, which is reflected at all times in the mentality of ethnic culture. One of such archetypes is the World Egg, in which the unified Chaos depicted as Heaven and Earth was enclosed. Realisation of potentialities contained in the World Egg occurs due to penetration of the Sun into the deep Waters. The birth of the World from the Duck Egg (*Ludo muno*) is the key idea of Mari cosmogony.

In the epic “Yugorno”, the Cosmos-creating Duck — *Golden Feathers, Turquoise Head and Azure Neck* — has a pair of beautiful sons: the eldest is Jum, and Jõn is the offspring. They co-exist in peaceful competition, although they argue about the forms of world-building and the ways of mastering the world: *The brothers set to work. / They made the sun from the yolk, / the air from the egg white, / the shell went towards the stars, / the delicate film to the sky.* Then Jum and Jõn alternately dived under the water and from the bottom of the world ocean took out silt, clay and sand in their beaks. From the delivered material, Jum formed a flat surface. He was pleased. But his brother didn’t like it:

Jõn got angry and spat, / spat out what was in his beak, / threw clods of mud / on the flat surface of the floor. / When they got up in the morning, everything had dried up, / could not be levelled and fixed / these mountains and hills, / these pits and ravines.

This is how each of the twins arranged the land in his own way: Jum made it flat and level, and Jõn arranged the mountains and ravines. Jum was very dissatisfied. The situation became even more aggravated when: *Jum began to mould / birds, beasts and man out of clay, / making samples for testing. / And then, checking them, / he made exact likenesses / and left them for a while / to dry in the sun.* Jõn continues to contradict his brother. Not only does he create diverse fauna, but he *has distorted* all the figures *so that not even two similar ones are left*. Here Jum was finally angry with his brother and sent him away to rule the underworld, but he himself went to heaven and henceforth ruled the Upper World, which was originally created ideal, while Jõn became the ruler of the Lower World, arranged according to his own judgement. Thus in the treasures of Yugorno poetics, through the myth of the diving bird, the ‘primary wholeness of the unconscious’ is represented, which is ‘symbolised by the circle, the egg, the primordial being, the ocean, the celestial serpent, the mandala... The birth womb of the Great Mother is expressed by images of the bottom of the sea, spring, earth, cave...’ [20. P. 4–5].

The ancient origin of the Jum (Jumo) cult is indicated by the fact that various attributes of this concept are also known to other Finnic-speaking tribes. Academician G.F. Miller noted: ‘The Cheremis have the same Jum that in ancient times the Finns had Jumala’ [21. P. 6–7]. A well-known expert of religions N. Zolotnitsky wrote: ‘God at meadow Cheremis is Jumo, Jumu, at mountain Cheremis — Juma. The

following languages have consonant names of God: Finnish — Jumala, Estonian — Jummal, Lapland — Yubmel, Zyrian and Permian — Yon, Votyatsky — In-mar. All these consonant names should be recognised as not accidental, but homonymic' [22. P. 17].

The name Jōn is not without an epic collision. The point is that it is preserved only in the most ancient narrative layers. In the times of the Volga Bulgaria the name Jōn was gradually replaced from the people's memory by the name *Keremet* (also *Kijamat*) (from Arabic 'Miracle, deeds of saints'). The semantics of the name Keremet — the younger brother of Jumo — is marked by many meanings. The main ones are:

- 1) With the name Jōn — one of the creators of the world;
- 2) With the name Keremet — the main deity of the Lower World (Ўлыл тўня), the Lord of the Earth and Water;
- 3) The Great God — the Judge, requiring veneration and strict observance of rites;
- 4) ancestral sacred prayer places — 'keremetishcha'. They could be in deep forests, tracts, on hills or spurs of ravines: *there were many groves in the Mari mountain side; and keremetishchas, old kapishchas of three hundred years old;*
- 5) earthly pantheon of gods-keremetey — inferior spirits of certain places, in Mari cult practice it got the name *ülöl vera* (inferior faith);
- 6) specially honoured forefather, glorious for his deeds and after death became the patron spirit of his descendants (for example, *Čumbōlat*);
- 7) evil keremets — usually ancestors forgotten by relatives, buried without observing traditional rites, disappeared in foreign lands and not buried in graves.

According to numerous folklore and ethnographic sources, we can say that Keremet has been 'dwelling' for a millennium in the entire Volga-Kama cultural area and is known to the Chuvash, Tatars, Mordva, Udmurts, and Slavs (Russians). In the epic consciousness of neighbouring peoples Keremet is the Lord of forests, fields, meadows, rivers and lakes. His role is to supervise all living beings, to establish order, the necessary balance of the landscape, the harmony of the ecosystem, in which a huge role is played by man. A person's happiness and well-being depend on the truth of his desires, aspirations, thoughts and deeds. And truth in the spiritual tradition is, first of all, measure, conformity. 'Nothing superfluous! Everything in moderation!' — is the golden rule in the living dialogue between man and nature. If a man violates the measure, Keremet will immediately come to him for retribution. The determinant of punishment is formulated in the epic "Yugorno" by the author:

I will not tell you / about the gods' harsh anger, / about retribution, about punishment — / our gods are benevolent / to every living being, / our gods are merciful, / but people themselves are cruel, / those who want to subordinate God's mercy / to their own desires, / to make it their own favour, / to make it their own law. / What is the danger of such liberty, / it would not hurt to think...

As noted above, in one of the hypostases Keremet acts as a judge, but on the principle of talion — one of the most ancient mechanisms of social regulation. As we have already emphasised, in epic narratives the peculiarities of creation and world structure are expressed both in the rigid antagonism of the hero and the anti-hero and in the peaceful competition between the gods-creators of different parts of the universe, understood by people as good and evil by virtue of the objective duality of the world. Human society has always acutely realised the need for sacral justice. The social-regulatory mechanism of talion accustomed ancient man to bear responsibility for his actions. This idea is also present in the Mari spiritual tradition.

Matchmaking of the hero. In the cultural consciousness the theme of match-making of an epic hero acquires special, unique features. In “Yugorno. Song of the Prophetic Way”, the love story of Salij and Pampalče is permeated with life-edifying epic. Etymologically, the name of the bridegroom comes from *сай лийже* — ‘let it be good’, i.e. Salij brings good into the world. This image is not common, scientists ‘caught’ it in Southern Siberia. Folklore tells about the strength, intelligence, good heart of Salij, his wanderings in the sky and in the underworld. After the hero’s death, Jumo called him to himself and sent him to the world of the underworld lord Kijamat to settle the conflict that had arisen after the underworld lord began sending the angel of death, *Azōren*, to earth more often. This led to a severe decline in those living on earth. Salij managed to chain Kijamat by cunningly placing him on his own iron trap throne. As a reward, Jumo promised to fulfil Salij’s every request. The hero asked for permission to come down to earth from time to time and help people. And to find out where he is now more needed, he asked for permission to sit on God’s throne, from which the whole earth can be seen. When he sat on the throne and saw all the sorrow of the people, Salij was blinded.

In the epic “Yugorno” Salij is a guslar storyteller from the glorious hunting family *Alataj*:

Salij, a glorious hunter, / the guardian of our forest / and its ancient laws; / the one who makes paths / from village to village, / guards watering holes / and tells people / what kind of animal to take so that there is no damage.

He remembered a wise proverb:

The road of life is hard, / it shakes the soul, / but what can you do now, / if you go this way?!

So his fate and destiny quietly leads him to the path of formation of the national, all-Mari world, that special world where legend and reality are joined together. And it is not by chance that his father’s hunting bow bears the name of *Keče* — the name of the light deity of the day, the patron saint of all living things. A young hunter carries *three arrows* in his quiver — *each one has a name, purpose and bearing.*

If *Shōpak* is a quiet, silent arrow that acts stealthily, then *Čolga* is bright and mobile, and *Viyaš* is strong and powerful. By the way, three types of Mari arrows are known in ethnic history. The first is a combat arrow — thick, powerful, with a metal tip, used both in military actions and in hunting large animals. The other two types are hunting arrows. The wooden or felt-tipped arrow was used when hunting valuable fur-bearing animals, only to immobilise them with a blow and not to damage their pelts. With a bone tip — for hunting birds and less valuable animals. The Mari heroic epic names the hunting arrows in Salij's quiver as *Honour, Dignity and Glory, and does not even want to see the fourth one — wealth — because it is followed by others — greed, lies, shame, treason...*

It was fate that Salij fell in love with the daughter of the old miller *Orčama*, who *had grinded only ashes near and under the bake for his old age*. But in order to marry the beautiful Pampalča, the young hunter will have to buy her back *from the whole honest world*. This is the custom, this is what the elders *have decided: if a girl owns the beauty of the whole nation, the people have the right to dispose of her beauty themselves*. Besides, the epic circumstances are such that Pampalče is not an ordinary girl and not just a beauty, but a character of the most important and favourite fairy tale of the Mari people 'Ший пӱян Ший Пампалче (Silver-toothed Silver Pampalče)', the younger sister of Jumōnūdōr. The author of the epic revisits this story, changing some details, but retaining the intrinsically organic epic wholeness. In moments of danger, Pampalče turns to the Maiden of Heaven — Jumōnūdōr — as a sister. 'In the fairy tale tradition she has an anonymous presence' [23. P. 123].

The paths lead Salij to the end of the earth. Here he met the Duck, whose two eggs had already produced ducklings — the creators of the world, Jum and Jōn. But the third egg was still with her. The epic hero sees before him a marvellous creature — Golden Feathers, Turquoise Head and Azure Neck. This marvellous curiosity is suitable as an *olno* (bride price). Salij wounds it with hunting arrows. However, having *laid a golden egg, dripping blood on the ground*, the Duck flew away. And the egg *shone brighter than the sun, burned hotter than a flame, was smoother than ice*. Who would have known that this very gold would bring the hero and all the Mari people great misfortune. Well, at first, when everyone saw it, they *forgot about decency, / about dignity and honour. / It was as if a cloud had rolled / over a wide meadow, / but it was not the rain from the cloud / and not hail that fell on the ground — / it was offences, / reproaches and rebukes*.

The great old man Almakaj tried to awaken the vigilance of his tribesmen by recalling the precepts of our elders:

What is shining is not yet the sun, / What is silent is not yet wisdom, / What is round is not yet happiness, / What is smooth is not yet truth...! / For none of our ancestors ever soiled their hands with gold, / Never took it as payment, / Never considered it as jewellery, / And did not bend their backs submissively, / Like distant peoples, / Who come from beyond the forest. /

The wise man beat the drum in vain and offered to *take the golden egg back to the place where it was taken and put it back with words of apology*. But no one listened to him — *everyone was dividing olno in their minds*. The passions were boiling and raging until a cockerel, bred for witchcraft rites, broke the egg with its beak. The egg splits with a deafening crash. *Targōltōš* comes into the world. He forces people to collect the golden shells.

Thus, the heavy campaign of the epic hero Salij, who resembles *a mighty oak tree: his head is as light as a crown, / his arms are as powerful as branches, / and he himself is like a rod, / the core of that oak tree*, — in search of a bride price became a great test, a prologue of his own and the nation's troubles.

Demons. A mythological monster visiting the human world is always an inhabitant of 'frontier' space (swamps, caves, ravines, etc.). In Mari folklore there are many narratives about travellers meeting with demons, 'unclean force', about wandering along roads, about meeting mysterious creatures resembling monsters. In almost every village there are ravines, hills, precipitous banks (*корем-влак*), which are perceived by locals as evil places. The inhabitant of such places, *Targōltōš* everywhere appears as a dangerous creature for humans, in the form of a dwarf with a huge white beard, but he can also look like a zoomorphic giant. Meeting him always threatens a person with danger, misfortune, disease and even death. Connected with the left side of the world, he often remains invisible, penetrates into dwellings, likes to amuse himself at forks in the road, emitting all sorts of shrill sounds (laughter, squeak of a cart, neighing of a horse, crying of a child).

However, in some narratives there are references to *Targōltōš*'s much greater power, his suggestive influence on people, on their behaviour and way of thinking. This is exactly the archetype in the epic "Yugorno", after whose appearance the witchcraft charms of gold entangled the whole neighbourhood with heavy chains. Frightened by the arrival of *Targōltōš* in their region, people expelled the good Salij, erected *a golden statue* in their souls, and multiplied the evil on earth. They did not hear the prophecy of the sorcerer:

'Mari, / your souls will grow thin, / the thirst for gold will corrode them; / a horned king will reign, / he will trample you with his feet, / he will press you with a floorboard — / one brother will cry under it, / and the other will sing on it!

That is why the foremother duck did not let him into the light: *Targōltōš* in the epic consciousness of the Mari means the archetype of *evil gold vouver*, human greed and strife.

The confrontation with such monsters as *Targōltōš* has become a real war for the representatives of the Mari ethnoworld. To fight against him, it is necessary to involve the Hero (*Талешке*) — a semiotic mediator, also involved in the 'frontier' space. *Nōnčōk-patōr*, the 'Bogatyr of dough', one of the favourite fairy-tale characters of the Mari people, the protector of the offended, rises to the war with

the enemy. The full version of this fairy tale was brought by Sergei Chavain in his novel ‘Elnet’ in the mid-30s of the 20th century. Nönčök-patōr defeats many different enemies. He often appears in the triad of bogatyrs, in which he turns out to be the most clever, strong and brave. He is not boastful of his strength, and in accordance with his name (нөнчык — doughy, soft, pliable) he is soft and benevolent in his treatment of friends and neutral characters.

In the heroic epic “Yugorno” Nönčök-patōr, who became a symbol of patience of the people, fights against Targōltōš together with the bogatyrs Čučka and Čoraj:

The battle was thundering till dark, / till dark it was going on: / singing, howling, cheering, / laughing, / cursing and begging, / and weeping, and roaring, / and gnashing teeth, / and wailing with mortal longing! / How many warriors died! / How many heroes were wounded! The Ijas trembled. The remnants / retreated to the dark grove / at the edge of the valley. / With them Targōltōš...

In a duel with Targōltōš, Čučka dies, Čoraj is killed, Nönčök-patōr is wounded; the whole earth is covered with bloody dew:

We will wash every body with bitter tears / But will we wash the earth? / With a kind word of remembrance, / sweet beer with a candle, / honey, butter and pancakes / we will soothe the souls of the fallen, / but will the grief be consoled? / We will put the heroes to sleep in the soft earth, on the felt. / but will our memory sleep? The wounds of the dead do not ache, / but will the pain of the people subside? ...Glory to the eternal heroes! /

The phenomenon of Targōltōš along with *Ija*, *Ovda*, *Karmakaj/Kajōkasō* in Mari mythology can be attributed to the archetypes of negative reflection in myth, the adversary of man. In literature they have received the name — ‘shadows’. ‘Shadow’ according to C. Jung is a manifestation of the individual unconscious, which includes all displaced experiences and complexes. ‘Shadow’, on the one hand, is the opposite of the conscious ego, but on the other hand — the consciousness of a person as if ‘comes out of the Shadow’, and their continuous connection and at the same time separation Jung called ‘the battle for liberation’. ‘The Shadow’ is a complex structure, which, in addition to the subconscious, includes the properties and attributes of the ego that are inaccessible to the Self, and also partially includes the collective unconscious [24]. In Mari narratives ‘shadows’ are *Targōltōš*, *Ija*, *Ovda*, *Karmakaj/Kajōkasō*. For example, *Ovda* in the epic “Yugorno” is depicted as a *terrible old woman, / whose face is similar to a bark, / whose fingers have hooks to climb / high trees, / whose breasts have long sacks / of raw sheepskin, / and her hair is like a broom, / that sweeps the drying-house; / one eye was redder than coal, / and the other blacker than night, / the feet were like beating stones, / and the stance was like an oak deck. / Ovda lived in a black pit under the earth.*

In the epic heritage of all peoples, the archetype of lower earthly spirits generates destructive processes in relation to the world of people, culture, representing another world (chthonos, chaos). ‘Within the framework of traditional culture, the monster is perceived, first of all, as a cultural antagonist, a representative of the semiosphere with the opposite hierarchy of values and behavioural attitudes’ [25]. Over time, these archetypes remain in the cultural landscape of the people, actively influencing individual and collective consciousness. Usually each person addresses them personally and brings gifts: pancakes, a piece of bread, cheese or pie. Such images are the source for numerous plots of works of literature and art.

Liberation from the tyrant. Antiheroes are also revealed in the chronotope of epic culture. Together with the heroes, they form a ‘two-voice’. Heroes aspire to be, personify eternity as identity; anti-heroes, aimed at possession, realise their thirst for immortality through fame, power and wealth [26]. In the system ‘Hero — Antihero’ of the epic “Yugorno” the antagonist of the Mari ethnomir is *Pektemör*. His ascent to the throne begins with the deception of his kin in the sacred grove, which generates alienation and mutual antagonism in the society. *Pektemör* hates his rivals, violates paternal traditions, and is pathologically afraid of death. It is he, the wicked and cruel prince, who has managed to take all the forest expanses ‘in all four directions’ to his hands, that the insidious *Targöltöš* chose, took possession of his soul and conspired with him. (A parallel with famous characters from Goethe’s literary heritage can be seen here.)

The prediction of the old sorcerer who once exclaimed *that a horned king would reign*. Now the epic *Pektemör* has a new name — *Tükan Šur* (Horned Horn): *They say that on Shurminka / the earth groans, / and the people howl. / Tükan the horned rules there / with a merciless hand. / He rules with a belted scourge, / with a narrow twisted whip, / with a strong stick, / with a knotted club, / with eternal fear*. It was in such a rule that he conspired with *Targöltöš*, receiving immortality in return.

Mari folk literature contains a lot of information about *Kugu on* — the Grand Prince *Šuran Šur* (Horned Horn). In the epic “Yugorno” he is called *Tükan Šur*. The Mari words *мыко* and *ууш* are homonyms. As the famous Mari folklorist Vitaly Aktorin wrote, ‘the legends of the Kirov region contain a motif of mass resettlement of Mari under the leadership of Kukarka, Šuran Šur, Boltush: the Kukarka clan settled near the mouth of the Pizhma River at the site of the present-day town of Sovetsk, the *Šuran Šur* clan — at the site of the village of *Shurma* in Urzhumsky. *Shurma* village of the Urzhum district, Boltusha clan — in the place of the town of Malmyzh. Under a clan in legends a certain tribal group is understood: so *Šuran Šur* had old men-advisors, apparently, heads of clans — *Petegan kugyza*, *Shtrek kugyza*, *Oldygan kugyza*, *Tonatar kugyza* — founders of several settlements, *Mamash*, *Akmazik*, *Blika*, *Eshpolda*, *Aktigash*, *Tanay*, *Dolgoza*, *Chimbulat* are mentioned. The descendants of the clans distinguish each other to this day: those who consider their ancestor the Kukarki clan — *Shymakshan Mari (Shymaksh* — a type of headdress. *Note G. Sh.*), the *Šuran Šur* clan — speakers of the Urzhumo-

Shurma dialect of the Eastern dialect, the Boltusha clan — speakers of the Malmyzhsko-Kilmez dialect...

The name Shurma comes from a variant of the name Shurmari: it was Šuran Šur who founded a fortification on the place of the village... The existence of Mari towns along the Vyatka, mentioned in legends, is confirmed by sources. And, probably, they were not just fortifications against attacks of external enemies, but also political, trade, military centres that united different groups of Mari. Šuran Šur, having founded the city, ‘settled his tribe along the rivers Urzhumka, Bui, Nemda, Shinerka, Turek-Talmek, Yurgemka, Vedener, Shurminka, Roika, Oshlanka, Mazorka’ [16. P. 38, 40]. In the legend about this prince there is an indication that, having organised the principedom on Vyatka, he ‘has established yasak for simple people in the form of skins of animals, honey and the first-born boy from each family’ [16. P. 38]. Legends and legends depicted him as a tyrant, ‘as a demon-like cannibal: he prolonged his life by eating the hearts of ten-year-old children: any of the women three nights after the wedding could belong to him, and then he killed her first child’ [27. P. 127]. ‘Probably, the cannibalism of Šuran Šur is just a metaphorical expression of the slave trade characteristic of the medieval Middle Volga: the sold children were exported from here to the Eastern countries. The right of the first night and the selection of first-born children testify to the development of feudal relations, the unlimited power of the prince’ [16. P. 41].

Thus, the epic plot about the tyrant Tükan Šur in the poetic creation of A. Spiridonov “Yugorno. Song of the Prophetic Way” is a representation of the image of an anti-hero. With his description, anti-value, anti-meaning, anti-creation (as in the case of the archetype of the ‘shadow’) penetrate into the positive connotation of the axiosphere of the Mari epic. According to C. Jung, ‘the psychic system of collective, universal and impersonal nature is identical in all members of the species *Homo sapiens*’; ‘unconscious images of instincts ... models (patterns) of instinctive behaviour’ have timeless and extraspatial character, manifesting themselves in all people and in all cultures without exception and forming ‘universal and extra-historical codes of comprehension and description of the world’; ‘there are exactly as many archetypes as there are typical life situations’ [24. P. 70, 71, 76]. Against the background of classical thought about archetypes, the role of oral folk art in modern cultural consciousness is noticeable. The epic again and again actualises the hidden nature of human evil. Archpriest Alexander Men has very precisely revealed this theme: ‘...the evil with which man is most closely in contact lives in himself: the will to dominance, to suppression and violence — on the one hand, and blind rebelliousness, seeking self-assertion and boundless space for instincts — on the other. These demons slumber at the bottom of the soul, ready to burst out at any moment. They are nourished by the sense of the ego as the only centre of value’ [28]. So Tükan Šur, who considered himself immortal, only increased his fierceness and rage. But full of the anger of the people. Akmazik, who was in love with the tyrant’s daughter, was destined to become the people’s liberator, to fulfil the rightful

judgement over Tükan Šur. He knew: *‘There is no death if you know for sure that victory is with you!’*. Akmazik hears the epic pathos:

Strengthen, dear land, / this holy host, / give them good fortune by the handful, / not by a small pinch, / feed them with good power / from the life-giving depths, / drink from the veins of your magical springs / with life-giving bright brogue — / for they are not just stones / from a roadside ditch, / but pearls of the people, / guests of fleeting life, / glitter of fleeting glory.

It was not Akmazik, not the sword, but all-powerful human Love that brought death to the cruel ruler: *The age of Tükan is over, the time has come for the young Chumbōlat!*

Conclusion

The poetic creation of the Mari heroic epic “Yugorno. Song of the Prophetic Way” by A. Spiridonov and A. Mokeev in Russian and Mari languages is an unprecedented fact of art, a unique cultural phenomenon that multiplies the cultural wealth of our multinational Fatherland. The value choice of the heroes of the epic submerges into the spiritual archeology of the unique ancient Mari people, guarantees understanding of deep wisdom, inner hidden laws of life, subtle movements of the human soul. Different variants of folklore ethnonarratives used by the author to create epic images, interaction of axiological dominants of the large Mari ethnoworld reconstruct the wholeness and unity of epic consciousness. Mythological characters are not tied to specific loci and are widespread everywhere. In the axiosphere of epics, the key idea in the understanding of life and its origins is the idea of nature. Through ritual (mystery) the Mari people embodied the idea of a proper natural order. Ancient Mari rites, customs, holidays, habits and skills predetermined a stable moral imperative. The formation of the value paradigm of the epic “Yugorno. Song of the Prophetic Way” was greatly influenced by the spiritual tradition with its myths, legends, epic legends, folk songs, universality/humanity of basic values. A. Spiridonov showed the ‘value centre’ of the life of the Mari people, which is expressed in the fact that it is not the individual feats of heroes that make up epic events (all epic heroes in one way or another fight death in all its manifestations) but the state of the people, its substance, its heroism. And this is indeed a ‘Experience of a Synthesis’, due to what characterises this work as a reflection of those distant Big and Small times, as echoes of heroic and tragic events, but, most importantly, it is still the sound of the loud voice of the present time, our post-postmodern 21st century. Indeed, the past interprets us:

Oh, Great Nature, White World, / Oš Kugu Pürtys! — / a world where we are but children! — / teach us to live reasonably, / return what we have lost: / put your language in our mouths, / open yourself with your sight!

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