

## **MARI AND MORDVA TRADITIONAL VALUES COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS AS EVIDENCED IN PAROEMIAS**

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### **Abstract**

The aim of the paper is to show the results of the comparative research of the ethnic value systems of the Maris and Mordvinians on the basis of reconstruction from folklore paroemias of two ethnic groups. The authors use a complex system of techniques and stratagems applied to 6840 proverbs and sayings chosen from specialized dictionaries printed in the corresponding regions.

A methodological basis resting on theory of systems analysis makes use of componential and contextual types of research as well as quantitative evaluation with a dichotomous method leading to an identification of four groups of ethnic values. In the hierarchy of value orientations special attention is paid to intolerable vices and moral flaws.

The order of the investigation includes several steps among which the process of determining values, called 'factors', from paroemias with the help of semantic analysis is of primary importance. Quantitative evaluation showed eight dominant values common to the two eastern Finno-Ugrian ethnic groups. They are organized in a descending order of their recurrence in the texts.

It is widely known that there are universal moral norms and standards, but the relevance and systemic relationship among them differ within each culture. It is essential to define Finno-Ugic traditional dominant values as the social stratification, ideology and the economy in the Russian Federation are nowadays being transformed under globalization processes. Such transformations generally influence the lives of ordinary people, their desires and aims.

As is known the continuity and changes of an axiological paradigm mold the basis of traditional culture, consequently its investigation in systemic ties, showing the correspondence of central and peripheral values is regarded of current importance. Research into Mari and Mordvinian cultures, analysis of their axiological paradigms, primarily, shows the core elements of such a complex phenomenon as ethnic identity, revealing the degree of cultural affinity, and – secondly, lays the basis for efficient intercultural communication and the integration of ethnic groups under study into a multicultural world.

**Keywords:** Maris, Mordvinians, value, factor, componential, contextual, semantic analysis, quantitative evaluation, theory of systems analysis

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

The main purpose of the research is to determine and describe the traditional values of the two eastern Finno-Ugrian peoples, Maris and Mordvinians. The comparison of the delineated values can show non-

material cultural closeness of the ethnic groups under study. As is known culture includes many components and the comparison of even two cultures means a problematic task. But by comparing only ethnic axiological systems the goal can be achieved. The hypothesis is that the leading ideas and principles of any ethnic culture are embodied in its values.

It is widely known there are universal moral norms and standards, but their relevance and systemic relationship among them differ within each culture. The systems of values of different nations are not the same. In the U.S., for example, the set of values includes 'time and its control', 'change', 'equality', 'self-help concept', 'individualism and privacy', 'informality', 'action orientation', 'practicality and efficiency' and others in addition (Kohls, 2011). In other research works the concerns lap over with this inventory but scholars add 'efficiency and practicality', 'achievement and success', 'process and progress', 'activity and work', 'material comfort' and others (Williams, 1970); 'hard work', 'sobriety', 'moral purity', 'self-discipline', 'education', 'self-improvement' and others (Kang, 2009, p. 148-151). On the basis of sociological questionnaires dominant values of Eurasian civilization are 'stability' and 'permanency', 'collectivism', 'family', 'health', 'education' 'cooperation/collaboration', but not 'rivalry' and 'competition' (Popkov, 2009, p.51-64).

It is essential to define Finno-Ugric traditional dominant values as the social stratification, ideology and the economy in the Russian Federation are nowadays being transformed under globalization processes. Such transformations generally influence the lives of ordinary people, their desires and aims. As is known the continuity and changes of an axiological paradigm mold the basis of traditional culture, consequently its investigation in systemic ties, showing the correspondence of central and peripheral values is regarded of current importance. Research into Mari and Mordvinian cultures, analysis of their axiological paradigms, primarily shows the core elements of such a complex phenomenon as ethnic identity, revealing the degree of cultural affinity, and – secondly, to lay the basis for efficient intercultural communication and the integration of ethnic groups under study into a multicultural world.

The previous researchers' works have shown that traditional value system of any ethnos is represented in one way or another by folklore genres. They manifest various aspects of the people's life: folktales, songs, myths, legends, prayers, narratives, charms, riddles, etc. The authors offer the hypothesis in accordance with ethnic value systems are expressed in proverbs and sayings. Paroemias, being a separate genre, encompass accumulated folk experience and wisdom as well as generalized considerations on all aspect of the ethnic group's life formulated in the most concise and compact form. The accuracy of the obtained results has been confirmed by highly illustrative and plausible data filtered through the both nations memory over hundreds of years and representing opinions on all the aspects of the nations' life and showing peoples' interests.

The results of complex analysis of 6840 paremias from seven dictionaries available to us (Grachyova, 2001; Ibatov, 1960; Kitikov, 1991; Kitikov, 2004; Mordovskiye posloviitsy, 2009; Samorodov, 1967; Ustnoye poeticheskoye tvorchestvo, 1967) are discussed in this paper. Investigation has shown that among the proverbs and sayings of the two Eastern Finno-Ugric nations there are folk aphorisms containing various values, such as 'happiness', 'beauty', 'quiet life', 'love', 'freedom', 'sin', 'time and space', 'good and evil', etc. (Lomshina, 2008, p. 339–341; Lomshina, 2014, p. 231–237; Lomshina, 2017, p. 97-103).

Nevertheless the core of the paroemiological stocks in the folklore cultures of the Maris and Mordvinians has been subsumed into eight completely similar groups, thus showing certain cultural affinity. To this list belong such values as: *ethics, family, food, health knowledge, labor, speech (language), wealth* shown in the alphabetical order). The enumerated values are found in the cultures common to all mankind, nonetheless the Finno-Ugrians diverge from other nations and one another either by the values ranking or by mere coincidence in such a distribution.

There exist scholarly papers and paragraphs in monographs dedicated to the description of the value systems of Finno-Ugrians based both on the results of the analysis of ethnic literary works, historical and folklore material and on the conclusion of sociological questionnaires (Shabykov, 2016). To analyze the degree of Finno-Ugric cultural affinity between the Mari and Mordva traditional cultures (their values systems) the authors employ a combination of methods and techniques (Glukhov, Glukhova, 2012, p. 60-72) which was used to folklore texts for the first time to describe a traditional Mari ethnic identity.

## **2. METHODS AND MATERIAL. METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK**

The order of the investigation, uniting linguistic methods and stratagems (componential and contextual analyses) as well as systems theory, which in turn involves quantitative calculations (the principle of a simple majority of a dichotomous method), consists of several steps.

At first folkloristic aphorisms were read and scrutinized with the help of componential and contextual types of analysis. The aim was to detect and describe values (entitled 'factors'). Research has revealed that the investigated paroemias have both literal and figurative meanings. They have been 'selected' in accordance with two criteria. Firstly, either the whole figurative meaning of the paroemia shows a certain value, or there are separate words pointing at something relevant or significant in people's lives, making the content of the proverb and saying literal. Secondly, the more crucial a value is, the more often it is used in the paroemias within the paroemiological stock of the ethnic group. This observation provides a possibility of the values ranking in a descending order of their priority.

The compiled inventory of proverbs was analyzed with the esteemed value incidence and then the possibility of value frequency was calculated. The data were then further presented in tables. The following stages stage was connected with the diagrams drawing. There the ranking of values in a descending order of priority was shown. The differential diagram displays columns arranged above and below the horizontal line, axis rendering in drawing how the positively and negatively connotated values are mentioned. The summarizing diagram exhibits each value as an independent column with a height proportional to its frequency of mention (shown in the tables). The columns are organized in descendent order. Additionally the dichotomous approach applied to quantitative information in the form of a numerical data helps to distinguish four values groups. They are formally classified into *dominant*, *complementary*, *auxiliary*, and *insignificant*. In the framework of the study correlation coefficients within the group were calculated and a matrix of Finno-Ugrian values was compiled. The research into the cultural affinity of Finno-Ugrians as evidenced in proverbs and sayings concludes with a summary of the results (Glukhov, Glukhova, 2011, p. 49-58).

As has previously been pointed out, factor analysis together with semantic investigation reveal the most abundant and frequently mentioned values in paroemias which have been classified into *eight similar groups* influential and meaningful in the traditional cultures of the Maris and Mordvinians. They are: *ethics, family, food, health, labor, knowledge, speech (language), and wealth* listed here in alphabetical order. In the proverbs and sayings each discerned value manifests itself in two ways: positively and negatively. Therefore, in the research value mention was accomplished separately with two signs: a minus sign for a negative connotation and a plus sign for a positive evaluation specified in the tables and in differential diagrams. This stage of research algorithm was implemented separately for each ethnic group.

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### 3.1. The Maris' System of Values

Ranking of values expressed in 3590 Mari proverbs and sayings taken from different sources (Grachyova, 2001; Ibatov, 1960; Kitikov, 1991; Kitikov, 2004) is as follows: *ethics, family, knowledge, speech, wealth, food, labor, health*. The dominant group consists of such priorities and concepts as *ethics, family* and *knowledge*. *Speech, wealth, and food* are united into the complementary, second group. The list of notions is completed by such valuable concepts as *labour and health*. In this paper there will be examples illustrating the ethnic Finno-Ugrians' values of the first group.

Within the factor "Ethics" people positively evaluate *kindness, bravery* (*Lýddymö eng kurykym sýmyralesh* 'A brave man will move mountains', *Kýchyzölan visen ok puen* 'Beggars are given alms without weighing', *Ik pury tsilä hudam iýktärä* 'One good action will conquer all evil').

Within the concept "ethics" there is a long list of man's characteristic features which is negatively assessed by an ethnic society. In Mari proverbs and sayings there is a very strong condemnation of *violence* (*Lepka lepkam shelesh* 'lit. 'One head breaks another' (there is always someone who is much stronger). *Maska viyan da tudymat kuchat* 'Bears are strong but even they get caught'); *laziness* (*Tachesh yara, erlazhym oyara* 'Today we have spare time, and tomorrow the day will be clear' = 'Today we are having rest and tomorrow the weather will be fine'); *greed* (*Kýrtnö pursam pyi dene purlash ogesh lii* 'lit. 'Iron peas can't be cracked by teeth'); *lying, treachery, deceit* (*Tangetym ondalet, shkeat ondalaltat* 'If you are dishonest to your friend, you will also cheat yourself'); *stupidity, brainlessness* (*Ushdymo vui iollan nele* 'A foolish head is heavy for the legs'); *fearfulness, timidity* (*Orade kaiyk-shamykh kukum varashlan shotlat* 'Brainless birds take a cuckoo for a hawk'); *stealing, thievery* (*Sholyshtmash – chon yomdarymash* 'Stealing is a soul loss'); *enviousness, malice* (*Kugu da engyn, izi da shkemyen* 'A big something but is somebody else's, a small something but is one's own'); *inebriety, drunkenness* (*Araka logarlan ilysh týrvolakesh kerzhaltshhe iisýs* 'A drinker's life is compared to an icicle hanging off a roof end'); *ingratitude, ungratefulness* (*Ýstel koklashke sösnam shynde, iolzhymat ýstembake pyshta* 'Seat a pig to table, and it will put its feet on it').

The next value in order of succession is «Family» and it occupies the second place in the hierarchy of

values: *Ik kid dene kok kidlan ok shu, shket ilysh ilyshlan ok shu* 'One hand will not replace two (hands), a lonely life will not take the place of a family'. In the analyzed proverbs people talk about large extended families as within a family clan it was easier to survive: '*Kugu tÿshka esh dene ilash kushtylgo* 'It is easy to live in a big family'. And: *Acha-avatym zhaplet gyn, kuzhu ÿmyran liyat* 'Respect your parents and your life will be long and happy'. Starting a family is rather difficult: 'You should have enough money for a house to get married'. No need to hurry to get married: '*Don't regret that you got up early, reproach yourself that you got married too young*' since '*A girl's life is like honey, a married woman's life is a dog's life*'. Bachelors get unfavorable remarks in proverbs: *Vatydyne marii vÿdym kychalshe kombo gai* 'A man without a wife is like a gander looking for water'. People's wisdom assume that '*The head of the family is a man*' though a woman's role in the family is not underestimated: *Vate poidara, vate yomdara, vate – surt mence* 'A wife may enrich and may make poor as she is the fortitude of the family'. The birth of children in the family is a new period not only in a married couple's life but in a complex big extended family hierarchy. Relationship with relatives by birth is also different, but the family ties become even more difficult after children mature and get married: *ÿdyr-vengych dene – polan kogylyo, ergych-sheshkych dene – shinchalan kogylyo* 'Daughter and son-in-law treat you with vibernum berry pies, son and daughter-in-law offer you salty pies'.

A descendent order of priorities comes to the factor "Knowledge". People think that knowledge is the most important thing in the world and it is also considered the greatest wealth (*Shinchymash – en kugu poyanlyk*). Knowledge as well as skills is transmitted from generation to generation. In the investigated proverbs and sayings knowledge is identified with the cognizance and thinking: *Ush – oza, shinchymash – una* 'Head (intelligence) is a host and knowledge is a visitor'. The researched material stress close ties between the brainpower, intellect and learning: *Shuko ilyshe ogyl, shuko tunemshe shuko shincha* 'That man knows much who has studied a great deal but not that man who had a lengthy life'. According to the paroemias knowledge might be obtained by several ways. One can learn necessary things from more competent and skillful people: *Mom ot shinche – shinchyshe dech tunem, mom moshtet – engym tunykto* 'Learn from those who know what you don't know yourself, teach others what you know'. People highly evaluate travelling: *Mÿndyr mlände ushym purta* 'Faraway countries help to gather knowledge'. One more way to become experienced is to read books: *Knigä pälymäsh kolovets* 'A book is a well of knowledge' and *Shuko ludat – shuko palet* 'When you read a lot, you know much'. But learning is not an easy process and knowledge is hard to obtain: *Ush pasha – nele pasha: vÿrym loktylesh, izhyngym todesch* 'Intellectual work is complicated: it curdles the blood and destroys the joints'. Not all the knowledge acquired from books helps in life, therefore proverbs and sayings highly evaluate competence and experience thus attaching greater importance to skills and manual dexterity: '*Skills are equally precious as knowledge*'.

The factors "Speech", "Wealth", "Food" constitute the second group of values. In the context of the proverbs they are used both with positive and negative connotations, the latter prevails. "Speech" is characterized unfavorably as negative assessment applies to excessive chatter, gossip, swearing, bragging, lies and hypocrisy (*Kandran kuzhuzho sai, mutyn këchykshö* 'A rope should be long, a speech should be short', *Mÿgyraltshe pechke – yara* 'An empty barrel makes much noise', *lylmet yaklaka – chonet kaklyaka* 'His speech is smooth and his soul is ugly', *Shoya mut – kum kechash, chyn mut – kurymesh* 'A false word is for three days, a true word is for ages').

The inventory of traditional ethnic priorities is concluded by such values as "Labor" and "Health". "Labour" has both positive and negative evaluation. For example, a positive assessment is given to the benefits of labor, and a negative is referred to its hardships or laziness of a person (*Pasha dene poyet, oigyren yomat* 'Working you will become rich, grieving you will disappear', *Pasham chot yshtyme ÿi den mÿiyim kochkesh* 'Who works hard, he eats butter with honey', *Kö numalesh tudylan shykyrakym arten puat* 'To those who bear/tolerate, will be given more to do').

### 3.2. The Mordvinians' System of Values

As disclosed by the analysis of 3250 proverbs and sayings borrowed from the dictionaries in Moksha and Erzya (Kitikov, 2004; Mordovskiye poslovitsy, 2009; Samorodov, 1967; Ustnoye poeticheskoye tvorchestvo, 1967), the Mordvinians regard the following values as the most important: *ethics, speech, knowledge, family, labor, food, wealth and health*. *Ethics, speech and knowledge* constitute the dominant group.

"Ethics" occupies the first place in the list of high-ranking notions. The paroemias denoting ethical virtues and vices exceed in number all the rest proverbs and sayings. It testifies to the fact that ethics is of great significance for the Mordvins. Comparison shows the same prominence of this value is received in Mari folklore. Here we can enumerate the names of ethical vices in the descending order of their mention in the Mordvinian paroemiological stock: *violence; unwillingness to work, laziness; greediness; stealing; dishonesty, deceit; foolishness, stupidity, brainlessness; cowardice, fearfulness, timidity; ingratitude; inebriety,*

*drunkenness; envy*. In the investigated Mordvinian proverbs and sayings *violence* is condemned most of all (*Kda parsta tevs' af tievi, kyazhsa – yofsi*. literal: 'If you can't reach a goal by doing it in a good way, you will never achieve it by malice'). *Laziness* is also strongly disapproved (*Nolat' falu pekots syaryadi. Lodyren' yala pekeze seredi*. lit.: 'A lazy person would always have a stomach ache'). The following ethical vices, weaknesses and failings are: *greediness, avarice*: (*Kozyan' kyad'sta tyalonda lov a fanat. Syulavon' ked'ste tel'nya lov pokol' a veshat* lit. 'A rich man will not share snow even in winter'), *stealing* (*Vor marhata yakat – vorondi al'nyakat (vor i ulyat). Salytsya marto yakat – salytsya ulyat* lit.: 'If you are in the company of thieves you yourself will become a criminal'), *dishonesty, deceit* (*Vas'kafnez' eryat – es' litsen' peryat. Manchez' kuvat' a eryat* lit.: 'You will not live long on falsehood and deception'; 'You can't live all your life cheating'); *Af videshisa eryams – esteit' kis' peryams* lit.: 'Life in falsehood is suicide'); *foolishness, stupidity* (*Yonftema korhtai kyal' – an'tsek kolai myal. Tevtame lapnytsya keles' – chavo par'se lauzha* lit. 'Say something foolish and you will reveal your stupidity'), *cowardice, fearfulness and timidity* (*Pelyat af es' kigat kyalyat* lit. 'Being afraid means choosing the wrong way'); *ingratitude* (*Lama parda tiyat – lama yalpat muyat. Lamo paro teyat – lamo yalpat muyat* lit. 'Doing much good means finding many friends'); *inebriety, drunkenness* (*Iretston'shis' (simondemas) tsebyar's af byati* lit. 'Hard drinking does not lead to anything good'); *envy* (*Loman' parshis lama sel'moda* lit. 'Many eyes keep an eye on someone else's property').

The factor "Knowledge" and the factor "Speech", hold the second and third places in the analyzed proverbs correspondingly. They have nearly the same amount of mention in the paroemilogical stock. The connotation analysis shows the positive estimation of this factor. Knowledge is related to the mind. People assume: *Pervei lomanes' prok lismaprya* lit. 'A gifted, brainy person is like a well', because 'Without pondering a person can drown in a dry swamp'. The best 'intellectual authority' is life itself as 'Life is the best teacher'; 'When you build a house, you will amass knowledge'. But you can also obtain wisdom and proficiency from reading books because 'Books inspire', 'Books give wings'. Proverbs and sayings analyzed stress the fact that people can acquire knowledge by asking questions: *Ki langa lomat' kizefnyat – p'il'kent zrya af sizefnyat* 'While traveling often ask the way, then your legs will be less tired'. Realizing that 'A human mind is a powerful force' helps one to avoid making mistakes in life and become prudent: *Molyat fkya shis', kshi syaft' nedelyas* 'If you go for a day, take bread for a week'. Proverbs and sayings reflecting people's attitude towards *speech*, note the connection of thoughts with words and advise to be reserved: *Vasenda ar'sek (kultshont), tosa val ast (korhtak). Vasnya kulsonor, meile kortak* 'First, listen, then, speak'. Besides, as is known 'The tongue is boneless and is never tired'.

The next frequently used value is "Family". Proverbs and sayings give a positive evaluation of the household and nearly everything connected with its life: *Koda af eryavat kshiftema-salftoma, stane af eryavat kudftoma-vastftoma* 'As it is impossible to live without bread and salt, so it is impossible to live without home'; *Kal'dyav sya narmonts, kona es' pisonts af kel'gsy. Beryan' se narmunes', kona esenez pizenez a vechksy* 'It is a foolish bird that defiles (fouls) its own nest'. Folklore texts note the advantage of harmonious relations in the family: 'You don't need a gold treasure if you there is a discontent/fret in the family.' Folk wisdom stresses a specific role of a woman in keeping up the house and raising the children in a certain way: *Semiyant' avas'-kozyaikas' veselgavtsy* 'The mother is the personal adornment of the family'. Proverbs and sayings describe close ties between parents and children: *Kodama shufta (koryan), styama I tarad. Kodamo pen'kas', istyamo otroskas'* 'Like tree, like its branches', *Kodama tyadyas' I stris' (babyas)* 'Like mother, like daughter'. In a good family children will highly regard their elderly parents 'To take care of parents is like paying an old debt'

There are many paroemias characterizing "Labour" especially those describing husbandman's versatile activities: *Kiye modants bidesy, sya vaimonts idesy*. 'Those who plough and sow the land will feed many'. Farming is unthinkable without domestic animals: *Traktse vacha – af nyayat vai pacha. Skalos' vacho – a neyat pacha* 'If you do not feed the cow well, you will not see buttered pancakes'. Proverbs may contain a contrast between a caring owner and a negligent one.

The last three factors, "Food", "Wealth", "Health", have been described in nearly the same amount of proverbs and sayings and can therefore be considered together. Attitude towards food is positive: *Kosa pachat, tosa af vachat* 'Where there are pancakes there is no hunger'. The ethnic group's approach to wealth is neutral and balanced. Judging by proverbs and sayings relative prosperity is associated with labor (*Lats sokat – kozyashis tokat. Parste sokat – syupavchis tokkat* 'If you plow well, you will be rich'), food (*Lama kshitse – lama kozyashitse. Lamo kshize – lamo syupavchize* 'Much bread means a lot of wealth'), money (*Yarmakne sembbe kenkshen' panchsaz* 'Money opens all doors'); and health (*Ulyat shumbrashisa – eryat kozyashisa*. 'If there is health there will be wealth'). People have created proverbs about poverty: 'In poverty and the days seem long' and one more, showing the reason for theft: 'Poverty may provoke a breach of the unwritten ethical norms'.

### 3.3. The Comparison of Mari and Mordvinian Systems of Values

Values 'act' as daily ground rules in social life. The findings of the investigation into axiological paradigm of two ethnic groups show that they have eight shared collective perceptions of what is good and preferable, united by closely knit systemic ties. Table 1. shows their probability distribution Mari and Mordvinian cultures.

Table 1. Averaged probability distribution of values mentioned in Mari and Mordvinian proverbs and sayings

№	Mari Values	Sums probability of usage	Mordvinian Values	Sums probabilities of usage
1	Ethics	0.224	Ethics	0.244
2	Family	0.151	Speech	0.141
3	Knowledge	0.145	Knowledge	0.138
4	Speech	0.108	Family	0.125
5	Wealth	0.106	Labor	0.124
6	Food	0.102	Food	0.077
7	Labor	0.088	Wealth	0.076
8	Health	0.076	Health	0.075
	Sums	1, 000	Sums	1,000

They prove to be such wide and extensive ideas that include several supplementary nuances of conceptual meanings. In this manner *richness*, *wealth* is identified by both ethnic groups with valuable possessions in terms of natural resources such as land, results of hunting and gathering. Trying to avoid unnecessary waste and being thrifty lead to prosperity according to both peoples' wisdom. Proverbs and sayings pay attention to *wealth* antithesis. Insufficiency in land or trade for basic goods is expressed by such ideas as *poverty*, *need*, *grief*, *wastefulness*, and *peonage*.

The value *health* is closely related to youth, physical attractiveness, good looks, neatness and tidiness, longevity, energy and toughness, strength and vigor. Its opposition – *sickness* and *ill health* – is associated with *old age*, *dirt* and *general uncleanness*.

The analyzed paroemias have vividly demonstrated that "Ethics" imbues nearly all situations and spheres of human life. In the paroemiological stocks of both ethnic groups ethical norms are perceived as a rigid, firm order for 'life management' in a big extended family with an emphasis on reverence to an elder man in the clan. Ethical norms reflected in the proverbs place women and children in a lower position, subservient to men and adults, respectively. According to proverbs and sayings the Maris and Mordvinians strongly disapprove of *aggression*, *envy*, *greed*, *ignorance*, *ingratitude*, *jealousy*, *laziness*, and *lying*.

The factor "Family" is also highly appreciated. In economies where people wholly rely on the self provisioning of the community members in big extended families should be closely knit for their mutual benefit.

"Knowledge", which is characterized positively, also is in the dominant group of value priorities. *Knowledge* in folkloristic maxims is expressed by such notions as *wisdom*, *common sense*, *experience*, *skills*, *foresight* and *prudence*. All these qualities can be achieved mainly within a family circle, by transfer of experience. Though there are paroemias showing that there exist other ways of betting knowledge: by traveling, at school, by reading books, newspapers and magazines. 'Knowledge' in the meaning of 'good proficiency in daily observations of the surrounding environmental conditions' and adequate adaptation to the modifications is appraised very highly. The traditional lifestyle of both ethnic groups demanded useful manual skills and considerable expertise in nature phenomena and climatic conditions for subsistence agriculture which was important for providing a normal life of all members of an extended family. No wonder, that this value has vividly expressed systemic ties with the factors "Family", "Wealth", and "Labor". The latter value priority has both negative and positive evaluation. Hardships of manual labor, people's laziness get a negative assessment.

The factor "Speech" in the paroemiological stock of both ethnic groups is characterized with an insignificant negative assessment predominance. People disapprove of excessive chatter, lies, gossip, boasting, hypocrisy, and insincerity.

The place of the factor "Wealth" at the end of the list clearly shows that the attitude towards wealth is neutral and in general people do not have a tendency to be greedy and have a spirit of possessiveness. The positive evaluation of the "Food" factor supports our view that probably both ethnic groups could find enough provision for a plain existence.

The last place belongs to the factor "Health" which provokes the question why health is almost not regarded as a value. In the paroemias analyzed the allusion to diseases and death is much more numerous than the recounting of health, strength and energy. It remains to be said that lack of concern about health care is expressed only in the analyzed proverbs and sayings. Other folklore genres show a different attitude.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

Wisdom embodied in Mari and Mordvinian proverbs and sayings indicates at the absence of spirit of possessiveness and hoarding and is in conflict with values of modern consumer society. Peoples' experience and prudence call for stoicism and peace of mind, require freedom from passions.

The folklore researchers' traditional view that studied folklore genres mainly contain reflections on ethnos' life experience and knowledge is incomplete. Finno-Ugric folkloristic aphorisms put *ethics* first as they consider it the dominant value which contributes to consolidation of society. The analyzed folklore genre has shown that knowledge in Finno-Ugric proverbs and sayings is means of acquiring wisdom and skills, as well as ability to live according to one's own essence. The results of knowledge are used in work not only for the sake of maintaining one's own physical existence but they also emphasize the role of labor as the main specific condition of human existence.

Finno-Ugric ethnic groups under study are united by condemnation of the same ethical vices: violence, laziness and lying. Numerous wars, aggressive intentions and aspirations on the part of neighboring ethnic groups, the difficulties of subsistence economy in their climatic zones of residence led to the rejection of the above mentioned factors. The use of speech for lies and deception has also received strong disapproval.

Condemnation of the same intolerable vices, flaws and shortcomings, praise of the similar virtues are important for the Finno-Ugrians since the identified norms of practical ethics, unwritten ethical rules not only contributed to the control of the behavior of the society members but also made the society itself more stable and united. It is precisely these values in the moral life of the two Finno-Ugric groups that determine commonality in their cultural values configuration.

It can be concluded that the analyzed folklore genre, in general, shows that two ethnic groups under study were in the state of homeostasis in which their life cycle was repeated from generation to generation without significant changes being in a relative balance with nature and other neighboring ethnic groups. The events of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries have thoroughly changed the lives of many people including the Finno-Ugrians affecting their value systems. These developments are waiting for new researchers

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