

MARI ETHNIC VALUES IN THE ARTISTIC WORLD OF THE YAKOV ELEKSEYN'S STORIES OF THE 1920S

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Abstract

Yakov Elekseyn's stories were bright artistic expression of the Mari worldview in the first third of the XXth century. Ethnic values, defining the author's ideal and being conceptually significant meaning of his works, received artistic expression, penetrating into all levels of the text.

The purpose of this article is to give an ethno-axiological characteristic of the artistic world of Yakov Elekseyn's stories of the 1920s. Research methods are historical-genetic and structural-semantic.

The ethno-axiological analysis of the Yakov Elekseyn's stories is possible at the following levels of the text: 1) problematique, 2) artistic space, 3) the behaviour of the character, 4) nomination of characters, 4) contexture of the plot, 5) folklore intertext.

In the Mari writer's stories amicable family, open and honest life are proclaimed as generic, patriarchal (ethnic) value («Birch bark box» story). Yakov Elekseyn's traditional topos are house, village and the territory closest to it. The value of this world, ontological attachment to it of the stories' characters appear as the most important ethnic component of the Mari consciousness and the conceptual canvas of the ideological world of works.

Work as the main value of life of the Mari in the Yakov Elekseyn's stories is most of all poeticized in his collective version. General and amicable, ordered by a natural cycle itself, it appears as need, joy and pledge of prosperity.

Yakov Elekseyn, according to people's representation, asserts moral purity, honesty and decency in human relations, between the man and the woman. These values «open» in the work through the study of the contexture of the stories' plot.

Male characters are given with personal names, for the most part coupled with the word «kugyza (кугыза)», pointing at venerable age and wisdom by life experience, while their wives are all nameless, they are called exclusively by the name of their husbands, what is connected with national philosophy, with understanding of the male as the founder and the protector of a generation.

Yakov Elekseyn often expresses ethnovaluable semantics with the help of folkloristic intertekst (proverbs, sayings, taboo-ойӧрӧ, prayers).

Folk axiology is the very core of the author's artistic conception. The works affirm the norms of social and personal behavior, based on respect for the generation and spiritual and moral traditions of the ancestors, on

careful attitude to laws of the nature, family and labor values.

Values and anti-values of consciousness of the Mari people are reflected in various substantive and formal components of the text; the ethnoaxiological conception of the author becomes means of their association into a single artistic whole.

Keywords: Mari literature of the 1920s, story, artistic world, Yakov Elekseyev, axiological paradigm of literature, value and anti-value, poetics.

1. INTRODUCTION

In the history of development of the Mari story it is possible to allocate two factors of updating of its ethno-value content: 1) specifics of time and a sociocultural situation in it; 2) creative additions of the writer, nature of his talent.

Certainly, the beginning of the XXth century, marked in the Mari region by spirit of revolutionary transformations and the national liberation movement, and the 1920s, filled with «euphoria» of ethnic revival and period of prosperity on the basis of value authorities of the people, belong to the periods of the greatest interest of writers to the national mentality and valuable traditions of the people.

In virtue of ability to react quickly to the «challenges» of time and «mobility» of the genre structure itself in the Mari literature there was a story in the center of the art reception of national values.

Yakov Elekseyev's stories were bright artistic expression of the Mari worldview in the first third of the XXth century. Ethnic values, defining the author's ideal and being conceptually significant meaning of his works, received art expression, penetrating into all levels of the text. The specified vector of art content in the Elekseyev's stories in comparison with the works of other authors is most clear due to the fact that, firstly, there are almost no major social and public problems in them (if there is, then the social plan is, as a rule, the exposition of the main action, means or a factor of creating / switching to the moral and ethical line of narration and the everyday situation). Secondly, Elekseyev is a writer with pronounced ethno-poetics; all his works, including stories, abound with the ethnographism and ethnographism, creating their folk intertext and reflecting «century-old values of national spiritual culture» (Dalgat, 2004, p. 4). Accordingly the folklore-ethnographic layer of his stories opens up wide possibilities for studying the valuable world view of the Mari people. This research approach of national prose is a new direction in the Mari literary science, which is represented currently mainly by the authors of this article. (*Kudryavtseva, 2014; Kudryavtseva, 2015; Kudryavtseva, Belyaeva, Ryabinina, Lastochkina, Andrianova & Mikhaylov, 2017; Belyaeva, Ryabinina, 2018; Kudryavtseva, Belyaeva, Ryabinina & Shkalina, 2018*).

The purpose of this article is to give an ethno-axiological characteristic of the artistic world of Yakov Elekseyev's stories of the 1920s. Research methods are historical-genetic and structural-semantic.

2. OPINIONS AND DISCUSSION

The ethno-axiological analysis of the Yakov Elekseyev's stories is possible at the following levels of the text: 1) problematique, 2) artistic space, 3) the behaviour of the character, 4) nomination of characters, 4) contexture of the plot, 5) folklore intertext.

The components of the national «metanarrative» in the problematics of Yakov Elekseyev's stories are family, kin and life in harmony with the rural world (not only with the natural, but also with the human). Amicable, open and honest life in family and in the world are proclaimed as ancestral, patriarchal (ethnic) value in the story «Birch bark box». Ignoring it by Chopay, and the dramatic emotional experience of this fact by his parents is a violation of habitual tranquility of the family and the world surrounding it, friendly community interaction. The idea of destruction of the social and spiritual harmony highly valued by the people strengthens by a contrasting picture of the natural amicable world, for example, the description of the bird's life in the forest.

In each of his stories the author pays a lot of attention to the description of the nature, log hut, rustic courtyard with its household attributes. Yakov Elekseyev's traditional topos are the house, the village and the territory closest to it; the life of all characters is built as everyday domestic, natural, ordinary, natural communication with the nearest and dearest and with the outside world. The value of this world, the

ontological attachment to it of the stories' characters appear as the most important ethnic component of the Mari consciousness and the conceptual canvas of the ideological world of works.

The moral values of the people are the basis of the characters' temper both old and young. At the same time, ethnic standards of morality appear in different ways: 1) either express themselves directly, and the characters are designated by positive mode (as a rule, all these characters are of a certain age – both main and secondary, and episodic; the rest are depended on the value opposition stated in the work), 2) or they are expressed by contradiction (the character as an expression of anti-value). Both in the first and in the second case the writer naturally «builds» stereotypes of conscious and unconscious ethnic behavior. Thus, the honor of the kin and family in the story «Birch bark box» makes the father and mother ruthlessly turn away from their son-deserter. The Chopay's bride does likewise: she openly and directly refuses her beloved one. The reason is the social value of morality (shame in front of people, relatives and fellow villagers).

Work as the main value of life of the Mari in the Yakov Eleksey'n's stories is most of all poeticized in his collective version. General and amicable, ordered by a natural cycle itself, it appears as need, joy and pledge of prosperity. This is what is mentioned at the beginning of the story «The words of the grandfather»: «Сүрем эртен. Шемер калык идалык мучко ямдылалт вучымо, чон канен ыштыме пашашке пурыш. Ончычак шудым, солен, поген налаш күлеш, вара уржам тўредаш, адак вес шурным. Тыге шыже марте мариий куанен ышта, чонжо чотрак йывыртен коштеш» (Eleksey'n, 1990, p. 33) («Surem passed. People joined in work-outlet, for which he prepared and waited for the whole year. At the outset it is necessary to mow, collect hay, then to remove rye, other cereals. So the Mari work joyfully until the autumn»). Further narration in the work is a good conversation of the grandfather with his grandchildren at the time of the height of total adult labour – on tacking of the game (child labor) and simply naturally organizing upbringing of children, wise teaching of life: «Элексей кугызат, кум уныкажым погалтен, пўрт шенгеке лектын, ладыра куэ ўмылысў изи тенгылыш шинчеш: йоча-шамыч, йўратыме чочойышт йыр погынен, модаш тўнгалыт» (Eleksey'n, 1990, p. 33) («And the grandfather Eleksey, gathering around himself three of his grandsons, went out behind the house, sat down in the shadow of a spreading birch: children, having taken place around the beloved grandfather, began to play»); «Уна, эргым-влак, ават кочкаш шолташат толеш. Айста пурена. Тый, Инюк, презым поктен тол, ме кудеш шанчам пуртен олтена, – манын, Элексей кугыза, ньогажым вўдалтен, пурен кайыш» (Eleksey'n, 1990, p. 35) («Look, my children, your mother is returning to prepare food, let's go home. And you, Inyuk, bring a calf, and we will bring chips into the house and make fire», – said the grandfather Eleksey, leading his little grandson, entered the house»). Thus, «adult» joy of labor is complemented by the joy of other labor – children and old folk (their complicity in it), highlighting the harmoniously built production, family and household life of the Mari. This joyful harmony is supplemented also by the natural plan itself, given by analogy with the human world: «Пўрт воктен шокшо кечеш шыранен кияш пий-влак лектын возыныт. Нунын игышт тўрштыл кудалыштыт, аваштын почшым, пылышыжым пурледыл, модаш тарватынешт; авашт кокла гыч, вуйжым нўлтылын, игыжым пурлшын коешат, адак вуйжым пышта» (Eleksey'n, 1990, p. 33) («The dogs crawl out one after another to bask in the sun near the house. Their puppies run around, biting their mothers for a tail, ear; trying to get them involved in the game; only occasionally, raising the head, the mother dog will pretend, that she bites her puppies too and freezes again»).

General work and values of family education, general joy of being determine the ethno-axiological concept of the story «The words of the grandfather». In an easy-to-talk game grandfather Eleksey teaches his grandchildren to elementary and important values of life, the main of them is the nature and its resources. Based on the experience of past and present, he asserts the value of harmonious human life in the nature and skillful handling of its riches.

The author's assessment of the characters in the Yakov Eleksey'n's stories is largely based on the moral and ethical values of the people. Almost in all of them male characters are given with personal names, mostly in conjunction with the word «kugyz», indicating a respectable age and sophistication of life experience, while their wives are all nameless, they are called solely by the name of their husbands (*Критон вате* – Kriton's wife, *Япык вате* – the wife of Yapyk, *Пайдыбай кува* – Paydybay's old wife, etc.) or even a son's («*Миклайын аваже*» – «Miklay's mother»). Such nomination has a deep background in national philosophy; it is associated with the proclamation of man as a value in the sense of «founder and defender of the kin», «epicenter of the family».

Personal female anthroponym is used, as a rule, only in relation to children, unmarried women (Roskovy – the story «Birch bark box», Olyuk and Anuk – the story «The cunning fox is caught into a bast snare»), or

women because of moral parameters deleted from the author's positive modality, defined by the national standard of behavior (Tayra – the story «One Tayra for seven Shayra»).

Each character is surrounded by a set of words denoting kin relations, as if they are specially repeated by the author, who strings them at each other. So, for example, it is constructed experienced speech of Chopay in the story «Birch bark box»: «Тудо адак шонаш тўнгалеш. Вуйышкыжо тўрлө куштыра пура. Теве **еш** коклаште илыме. Тудым **ешыште** «пустык икшыве» маныныт. **Ачаже** тудым шуко туныктен, вурсенат, ятыр гана тупешыжат логалтен. **Ачаж** ден **аваж** коклаште Чопай верч каргашымашат лийын. **Аваже** тудым эре арален» (Elekseyн, 1990, p. 5) («He begins to think again. Any rubbish climbs into his head. For example, life in the family. He was called in the family the «stubborn child». His father taught him a lot and scolded, slapped on the back more than once. Quarrels between his father and mother were because of him. His mother always defended him»).

The significance of the family and family relationships in the Yakov Elekseyн's stories also proved by the facts, that the image of an unmarried girl, for example, in thinking of a young guy (the story «Birch bark box»), is created by repeated repetition of the word «wife»; the image of young people necessarily appears in the perspective projection

of a possible marriage or wedding. Let's give as an example the internal monologue of Chopay «Росковий мыйым йӧрата. Тудо ончыкшо мыйын **вате** лиеш. Росковин мутшо кызытат шўмыштемак: «Армийыш коштын тол, тушманым, кырен, поктен колтыза, вара сайын мутланаш тўнгалына. От шинче, ала **ватемак** лиям...» (Elekseyн, 1990, p. 5) («Roskovy loves me. She will become my wife. I still «keep» Roskovy's words in my heart: «Go to the army, hammer and banish the enemy, then we will talk. Who knows, maybe and I will be your wife...»).

Yakov Elekseyн, according to people's representation, asserts moral purity, honesty and decency in human relations, between the man and the woman. These values «open» in the work through the study of the contexture of the stories' plot. Introduction of these or those situations, plot lines is explained just by ethno-axiological idea. Thus, in the story «One Tayra for Seven Shayra», such art function is marked by a seemingly humorous situation of writing a letter by the soldier, who pretended as disabled person because of a battle wound, and actually he deliberately arranged the exam for sincerity of feeling, honesty and decency to his women. «Silk» and frivolous Tayra don't meet the «wounded» hero from the battle-front, but his wife, who truly loves him, is able to empathize and support the family. «Орваш шич, мемнам кок эргына вучат» (Elekseyн, 1990, p. 47) («Sit down on the cart, we are waiting for our two sons»), – the story comes to an end with these words.

In another story, «Peter, who lives on the edge of a ravine», industriousness (almost an existential state), healthy pragmatism, obstinateness and will as the main moral values of the Mari people (together they make up some kind of «perseverance of life», that allows them to survive in any household, social, historical situation) are expressed in the plotline, which is built in the biographical key. The optimistic outcome of Peter's dramatic life is implicitly communicated by the author with the main character's loyalty to the people's value system, personal happiness and material wealth become an award for him.

Yakov Elekseyн often expresses ethnovaluable semantics with the help of folkloristic intertekst (proverbs, sayings, taboo-ойӧпӧ, prayers). For example, the proverb «The cunning fox is caught into a bast snare», taken out in the title of the story, becomes a plot and compositional motivation of the story conception, which is based on the statement of such important national value as knowledge. And everyday cunning and deception, exposed by the greedy and rather stupid Kripton as a substitute for knowledge, are declared by the author as anti-value. Kripton and his wife turn out to be victims of their militant ignorance: for the sold cow, hidden from taxes, the buyers paid for them, who could not read, instead of money, the labels from headscarves; and due to the concealment of income (cow) and non-payment of taxes, a request for summons came to them, and there is nothing to pay for the forthcoming fine.

3. CONCLUSION

So, using the example of the Yakov Elekseyн's stories, we proved, that folk axiology is the very core of the author's artistic conception. The works affirm the norms of social and personal behavior, based on respect for the generation and spiritual and moral traditions of the ancestors, on careful attitude to laws of the nature, family and labor values.

Values and anti-values of consciousness of the Mari people are reflected in various substantive and formal components of the text; the ethnoaxiological conception of the author becomes means of their association

into a single artistic whole.

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