

## **THE CONCEPT OF THE HEAVENLY BODIES IN THE CHUVASH LITERATURE AND IN THE POEM “NARSPI” BY K. IVANOV**

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### **Abstract**

In this paper, the images of the sun and the moon, which are the prototype of the spiritual world in Chuvash mythopoetic literature, are considered. The reflection of the concept of these heavenly bodies in classical Chuvash literature is also studied. The main attention is paid to the study of the sun role in K. Ivanov's poem "Narspi", where this concept acts as an image of the Almighty.

In Chuvash literary studies, many works are devoted to the study of literary traditions and artistic images originating from ancient times. The purpose of this study is to consider the concept of the sun and the moon in the context of the Turkic artistic tradition. This topic is relevant, as the study of deep connections of different peoples' mythopoetic literature helps to understand better both the work of individual authors and artistic trends in literature as a whole.

One of the Turkic literary traditions is the cult of the sun and the moon, which is associated with the folklore aesthetic views of these peoples. Cultivation of these images is observed in the literature of the Turkic peoples from the earliest period. The cult of the sun and the moon image was preserved in Chuvash literature.

The Chuvash have many myths where the sun and the moon were originally inseparable. Then they were separated by fate. In the myths of the moon and the sun, the animalistic worldview of the Chuvash ancestors is observed. These heavenly bodies are certain substances that are set to serve humanity. In the traditional culture of the people, they are perceived as living beings with human qualities: kindness, mercy, modesty, fatigue, etc. In Chuvash literature, the unity of the sun and the moon personify warmth and light.

The ancient Chuvash revered the sun and believed that it was impossible to speak badly of it, because it sees and hears everything. It was also a symbol of justice and prosperity in their lives. In folklore, the sun is deified. Although the moon, being its younger brother, does not play the role of a deity, but it is also a benefactor and helper of people living on earth.

Undoubtedly, the cult of the sun and the moon, having arisen at the dawn of mankind with the advent of the first religious beliefs, penetrated into the Turkic environment. The veneration of these heavenly bodies was being cultivated by the Chuvash ancestors for several centuries and, of course, a transformation took place. However, this tradition has been preserved in Chuvash folk literature, and the veneration of the sun and the moon was later reflected in classical Chuvash literature.

In the poem "Narspi" by K.V. Ivanov the sun is a kind of unique substance, which acts as a higher power, evaluating the events taking place in the poem. The sun in the poem is not just a symbol-epithet, but one of the acting heroes, which sometimes replaces the image of the narrator, condemns the actions of some

heroes, sympathizes with others, and evaluates the third ones.

Mention of the sun image is present at the very beginning of the work and at its end. The work begins with a description of the origin of life in the spring and ends with the death of the main character. One circle of human life closes. But time and the universe are eternal. The constancy of traditions, the natural world is transmitted through the image of the sun, which will move along its trajectory further. Thus, we have revealed that the Chuvash poet K.V. Ivanov turned to the cult images of the sun and the moon, developing them to poetic symbols.

**Keywords:** General Turkic literary traditions, the cult of the sun and moon, Chuvash myths and legends, the poem "Narspi", Konstantin Ivanov, literary images.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In Chuvash literary criticism, a lot of works are devoted to the study of literary traditions and artistic images, originating from ancient times. In particular, these are the works of V.G. Rodionov (Rodionov, 2006), I.V. Sofronova (Sofronova, 2011; Sofronova, 2004), E.P. Chekushkina (Chekushkina, 2016 (2); Chekushkina, 2004), E.R. Yakimova (Yakimova, 2014; Yakimova, 2016). The purpose of this study is to consider the concept of the sun and the moon in the context of the Turkic artistic tradition. We consider this topic relevant, since the study of deep connections of mythopoetic literature of different peoples helps to understand better both the work of an individual author and the artistic trends of Chuvash literature as a whole.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

Examples from the folklore of the Turkic peoples, Chuvash folk literature, as well as the classic poem "Narspi" by K. Ivanov were used as the material for the study. The research is based on images of the sun and moon, the most common in the folklore of the Turkic peoples. Methods of contrastive-comparative analysis are applied to achieve this goal.

## 3. OPINIONS AND DISCUSSION

One of the common Turkic literary traditions is the cult of the sun and the moon, which is associated with the folklore aesthetic views of Turkic peoples. The cultivation of these images has been observed in the literature of Turkic peoples from an early period. So, for example, in the poem of an Turkic author Yusuf Balasaguni "Kutadgu bilig" (Blessed Knowledge), created in the 10th century, the main characters are named Kuntogda "The sun has risen" or "The day begins" and Aitolda "Full moon", which are also close in tune to the Chuvash translation: *Kün togdy - 'Kun tuhrě', Ai toldy - 'Uyäh tulchě'?*

It should be noted that the sun and the moon image cultivation is preserved in Chuvash literature. So, in one legend about Ulyp it is said that the sun was the great-grandmother of Ulyp-bogaty. Another legend says that Ulyp was born on the full moon. The Chuvash also have many myths which say that the moon and the sun were originally inseparable. Then, by the will of fate, they were disconnected: according to one myth, the moon got lost, walked for a long time and turned pale with fatigue, after which it began to appear in the sky only with the sunset; in another embodiment, these heavenly bodies were separated by an evil spirit or wupär (läpär).

In the myths of the moon and the sun, the animalistic worldview of the Chuvash ancestors is observed. These heavenly bodies are certain substances that are set to serve humanity. Despite the fact that they are essentially inanimate, people perceived them as living beings, endowing them with human qualities: kindness, mercy, bashfulness, fatigue, etc. Returning to the poem "Kutadgu Bilig", we say that the name of the elik - Kuntogdy - symbolizes justice, and the name of the vezir - Aitolda - represents happiness. In Chuvash literature, the sun and the moon, forming an indissoluble figurative pair, personify heat and light.

At the same time, the moon is more vulnerable (evil spirits eat it, then it loses its road in the dark at night), and the sun, despite the fact that it is sometimes attacked by läpär (as the solar eclipse was explained), was ancestors' deity continuously watching their life. The ancient Chuvash revered the sun and believed that it was impossible to speak badly of it, because it sees and hears everything. It was also a symbol of justice and prosperity in their lives. In the poem of Yu. Balasaguni, the sun also occupies the central place. In the fact that the Aitoldy - the moon and happiness - dies, and the Kuntogdy - the sun and justice - remains, one can notice the author's allegory: justice is unshakable, and happiness, like the moon, is changeable.

As already mentioned, in Chuvash literature, the sun is revered instead of God, and the moon, being its

younger brother, although it does not play the role of a deity, is also a benefactor and helper of people living on the earth. The worship of the sun and the moon as the supreme deities of the Chuvash is also confirmed by the fact that during the oath they mentioned their names: *uyăhshăn ta, hêvelshen te* 'in the name of the sun and the moon'. In many Chuvash myths, the plot is preserved, which tells about the evil stepmother and her stepdaughter. The poor girl was sent by her stepmother at night to fetch water at a distant well. The compassionate moon heeded the requests of the girl, begging to take her to the moon, and took her. So, according to the traditions of the Chuvashes, a girl with a rocker appeared on the moon.

A similar idea of these heavenly bodies is observed in the folklore of other Turkic-speaking peoples, as well as in the myths and legends of the Finno-Ugric peoples, in particular among the Mari and Udmurts. Bashkir researcher A.N. Kireev reports on this issue that the sun appeared to people in the image of a woman, the moon - in the image of a man, a young dzhigit. In the Bashkir myths associated with heavenly bodies, the moon is portrayed as a handsome dzhigit who took an earthly girl who wanted to give birth to a big handsome batyr (Kireev, 1970, p. 27).

Yakut folklorist G.U. Ergis notes the presence of this plot in almost all Turkic and Mongolian peoples. So, D. Kugultinov uses in his poem "Sar-Gerel" a folklore plot about the origin of the moon. According to the Kalmyks, the sun is a grandfather who was going to marry the beautiful Sar-gerel. But the girl did not agree with such a fate, to which the sun takes offense and ceases to shine. Sar-gerel becomes the moon to save her people from cold and darkness. The Chuvash cult of the moon and the sun, therefore, goes back to that far period when the Turkic peoples were united in the Hunnic Kingdom and Tengri Khan, the lord of heaven, served as their main deity.

It is known that the Turkic peoples, in particular, the Savirs, when they lived in the North Caucasus, deified the sun and the moon, and they also worshiped the sacred trees, bringing them a sacrificial white horse. Scientists believe that the cult of Tengri and the worship of the God of the Sun, penetrated into Dagestan precisely with the tribes of the Savirs, who used to live in the Southern Urals among other Turkic-speaking tribes. In general, the cult of the sun goes back to even more ancient times. So, A.D. Grach believes that worship of the sun was widespread in the Sako-Massaget world before our era (Grach, 1980, p. 63).

Another researcher I.M. Dyakonov notes that the cult of the sun itself as a divine phenomenon in Babylonia and Egypt played a huge role, which could be not only creative (light, justice, antipodes of the night, darkness and evil), but also destructive (scorching, withering heat) (Dyakonov, 1990 p. 149).

Undoubtedly, the cult of the sun and the moon, having arisen at the dawn of mankind with the advent of the first religious beliefs, penetrated into the Turkic environment. The veneration of these heavenly bodies was cultivated by the ancestors of the Chuvash for several centuries and, of course, a transformation took place. However, this tradition has been preserved in Chuvash folk literature, and the veneration of the sun and the moon was later reflected in classical Chuvash literature.

So, in the poem "Narspi" by K.V. Ivanov, the sun is a kind of unique substance, which acts as a higher power, evaluating the events taking place in the poem. The sun in the poem is not just a symbol-epithet, but one of the acting heroes, which sometimes replaces the image of the narrator, condemns the actions of some heroes, sympathizes with others, and evaluates the third ones. The sun in the work performs the functions of a higher power, indicates temporary space.

So, researcher S.A. Aleksandrov believes that "... the sun itself, the creator of everything on earth, moving around the village - above and below it - takes care of it" (Alexandrov, 1990, p. 30). The mention of sunrise and sunset symbolizes the beginning and the end of the day, the alternation of work and rest.

According to the researcher G.I. Fedorov, "in the poem, the sun combines the cyclical nature of everything around and of the time. It is the witness to the events. It blushes due to the misbehavior of Narspi's parents, with the help of its ray it observes the actions of the healer, lets the young to walk around enough, sets on time. The sun is good only for residents of the village of Silpi. During her stay in Khuzhlga, Narspi does not feel its warmth" (Fedorov, 2000, p. 21).

"The function of the sun here is somewhat broader than just the creator and observer. It acts as a symbol of cosmic power, which warms the soul of the poet, people, makes you feel the beauty of life, shapes thinking" researcher V.A. Abramov writes about the significance of the image of the sun. (Abramov, 2018, p. 233).

A particle of the sun is present in the image of the main character Narspi. According to etymology, this name means "sun-kissed beauty, mistress." According to the linguist M.R. Fedotov, "the element nar in the name is the Mongolian nar - the sun" (Fedotov, 1996, p. 356). Other researchers explain the name Narspi as follows: "a girl born in February, or on the vernal equinox, i.e. on the holiday of Navruz" (Alexandrov, 2015, p. 46).

Some literary scholars associate not only the etymology of the name Narspi, but also the plot of the poem with Indo-Iranian origin. So, E.A. Lebedeva believes that the work is based on an ancient myth, according to which the tsar's daughter could marry only an equal groom. The elitism of the girl is expressed by the author in a pi-particle, Narspi, which is translated as "mistress", "woman of the highest circle", "lady". An alliance with a person of humble origin could lead to tragedy (Lebedeva, 2008). According to the interpretation of G.I. Fedorov, Narspi was born into this world to become happy, to bring joy to people. However, the self-interest of her parents killed her, she could not find her happiness in the human world, and then peace in the afterlife.

The image of the sun in the work appears in the first lines of the first chapter. In the poem, consisting of 14 chapters, the image of this heavenly body appears only 31 times. Researcher S.A. Alexandrov, reflecting on the role of the sun in the poem, notes the following: "... in "Narspi", we see that the sun has an active life-giving beginning, although this will not preclude its further role in showing the heroine's inner world" (Alexandrov, 1990, p. . 29).

According to the researcher, "the mention of the sun in the second stanza of the chapter contributes to the erection of the observation point of Sylby in the heavens." Indeed, the events taking place in Sylby and its vicinity are depicted as if from a bird's eye view: "*tusem-cärtsem hup-hura*" - 'on the mountains the soil is black'; "*tuhat' kuräk çăp-çăra*" - 'thick-dense grass breaks through'; "*putăksempem-varsempem çëmërëlse shyv kerlet'*" - 'spring water rages over ravines and hollows', etc.

Thus, the reader gets the impression that all the vicissitudes of life in the Chuvash village (and maybe the entire Chuvash world) occur under the unshakable supervision of the sun. The author of the poem, who was well versed in the oral culture of the Chuvash, undoubtedly knew the legends and myths of his ancestors about the sun. This can explain the "constant expansion into the imaginative space of the sun." In addition, at the beginning of the twentieth century, the traditions and images of Christianity had not yet been strengthened in the thinking of the people.

Elements of the myth continued to live in the Chuvash worldview. They are alive in the memory of every representative of the nation, especially in the thinking of creative people. K. Ivanov also absorbed samples of literature from his childhood, was engaged in collecting and studying them. For him, the world around him seemed animate, therefore, in his work "a myth acts as a form of world perception of both heroes and the author himself" (Amineva, 2013, p. 478).

As already noted above, in the work the image of the sun performs not only the role of the heavenly body, but also acts as the Almighty, evaluating the events that take place. At the beginning of the poem, it, charmed by the village of Silbi and its vicinity, gives the Chuvash world its warmth: "*khevel pährë äšätsa*" - "the sun is looking warmer", then "*hërtneçem hërte'*" - "warms stronger", and now the whole space is enveloped in it: "*hëvel sovat tēnchene hël yykhinchen văratsa*" - "the sun caresses the world, wakes up from hibernation".

The poem clearly shows that the sun rejoices in spring prosperity, we see how it plays with its own rays in a bubbling stream that flows next to Sylby. The reader's gaze is presented by an idyllic picture of the Chuvash village. This harmoniously created by the Almighty order reminds us of the Garden of Eden. The sun favors everyone: both people and nature. When Setner and Narspi meet at the spring - two loving hearts - the sun rejoices, listening to the conversation of lovers. It should be noted that throughout the first chapter daylight hours are described, only at the end of the chapter, evening, sunset are mentioned despite the fact that a rather long period of time is shown here - from the end of March to the end of April. The whole chapter admires the riot of life and the triumph of daylight.

Further in the poem, images of Migader with his old wife and Tkhtaman appear, blinded by the thought of enrichment. Thus, the idyll of the village of Silby gradually collapses, and the sun, giving way to developing events, already recedes into the background. It is as if it begins to fulfill only its ordinary function - to rise in the mornings and to rush towards sunset in the evenings.

However, in the chapter "*Çimëk kaçë*" (Evening Before the Semik), we see that the sun, watching how Narspi's parents forcibly give in marriage their daughter to Tkhtaman, even became red from outrage. A similar thing happens to it in the chapter "*Atte-Anne*" (Father and Mother), where Migeder and his old wife curse their daughter and Setner: From shame blushing, the sun / Set. The darkness fell.

However, even when the sun is hidden from the human eye, Sylby is not left by the Almighty: the moon appears in the night sky, protecting the peace of the Sylbian toilers. Watching the sleeping village, the moon sees the inconsolable Narspi: the poor girl's heart breaks in thoughts of separation from her beloved. A compassionate month, not being able to help her, is hiding behind a forest.

In various studies, it is noted that the events in the poem are constantly unfolding against the background of

mythological images: "The chapter "Narspi ęçę" (Crime of Narspi) begins with a description of the sunrise. No matter how unhappy poor Narspi was in her husband's house, however, while there is no evil rock above her, the sun also gently shines on her. With the sequence of tragic events in this chapter, the attitude of the spiritual world towards the main character, who called from the other world the old woman Shabadan to poison the hated Tkhtaman, also changes "(Chekushkina, 2016 (1), p. 42).

The moon also appears that night when Narspi, who killed her hated tyrant husband, runs away from the house of Tkhtaman. But Narspi, who had already fallen into the power of the dark forest (in mythology, the evil, dark forces of the other world), escapes the gaze of the moon, thereby rejecting the help of the Almighty (Yakimova, 2019, p. 135).

"The mythopoetic thinking is characterized by the opposition of white - black, reinforcing the essential opposition of life - death," - notes S.A. Alexandrov (Alexandrov, 1990, p. 38). Indeed, if the first part of the poem sounds like a hymn to the sun, life, love, white light, then in the second part it is just the opposite - the minor notes of the approaching tragedy are heard more clearly. The last time the image of the sun appears in the finale of the poem, where the inhabitants of Sylby find the body of Narspi, who laid hands on herself.

Despite the fact that the life of the poor little soul ended, the sun continues its eternal cycle. Mention of the image of the sun is present at the very beginning of the work and at its end. The work begins with a description of the origin of life in the spring and ends with the death of the main character. One circle of human life closes. But time and the universe are eternal. The constancy of traditions, the natural world is transmitted through the image of the sun, which will move along its trajectory further.

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

Thus, in the poem "Narspi" the sun acts as the Almighty, who either blesses or condemns the actions of the heroes. The author of the work, of course, did not accidentally give him such a right. K.V. Ivanov, having taken in with mother's milk the ancient artistic traditions of the Chuvash ancestors, turned to the cult images of the sun and moon, developing them to poetic symbols.

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