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**ARTISTIC REPRESENTATION OF TRADITIONS AND RITES IN**  
**BASHKIR EPIC “URAL-BATYR”**

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**Abstract**

The epic “Ural-Batyr” is an archaic epic work of the Bashkirs. Its ideological and artistic plan reflects the ancient world of our ancestors, their moral, spiritual values, worldview as well as the surrounding world, the world of people and demiurges. The struggle between good and evil, moral and immoral is the main idea of the epic. At the center of the interweaving of events, the acute moments of the development of this or that picture in the epic is a batyr being an ideal hero who embodies not only the dreams and aspirations of the people, their worldview but also their life and daily routine, customs and traditions. The article discusses the artistic and aesthetic, ideological and thematic reflection of the rites and customs of the people, their ancient and sacred beliefs. The moral and ethical views of people on the world, the surrounding nature, human nature and the concepts of good and evil have turned over time into certain traditions, important canons of etiquette. By the example of images and motives, it was found that those traditions found an echo nowadays, still preserved both in life and daily routine, the views and beliefs of many Turkic peoples, the Bashkirs in particular. Studying the artistic and aesthetic originality of rituals, the moral and ideological foundations of the people in their epic heritage will largely enable to consider the epic in all its diversity and originality and understand how ancient traditions have survived to this day.

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## 1. Introduction

The Bashkir folk epic “Ural-Batyr” covers the ancient period of the life of not only of the Bashkirs’ ancestors but the ancestors of all mankind, reflected in the depiction of the biblical story about the flood and the birth of life on a new earth. At first glance, it is so. However, as it turns out later, the land on which the life of the people of Yanbird and Yanbike with their sons Shulgen and Ural-batyr revived is not entirely uninhabited. Good and evil coexist on it adjacently. However, the basis of the epic is the customs and traditions of both people and demiurges being evil mythical forces, the fight against which the cultural hero Ural-Batyr devotes his life and bequeaths this tradition to his sons.

## 2. Problem Statement

The article attempts to solve the problem of ritualism in the epic, its artistic and aesthetic functionality. In order to solve it, it is necessary to identify and reveal the etymology of the ancient rituals that formed the basis of the Bashkirs’ traditional culture, to establish their ideological, artistic, and thematic features, their artistic functionality in representing the main plot.

## 3. Research Questions

In the explanatory dictionary of the Bashkir language, the word “yola” (rite, custom, tradition) means a course of action passed by word of mouth for generations and has become the rule (Explanatory dictionary of the Bashkir language, 1993). As Inan (1998) being a Bashkir researcher in emigration wrote, among the Altai people, the same concept was known in several meanings, specifically, “soul”, “rukh”, “breath”, “tyn”, “well-being” (Nadrshina, 2003). Consequently, “yola”, being a universal concept, was understood by Turks in more than one meaning, which included the worldview of the people, the rules and regularity of a lifestyle, experience, and moral, ethical values, etc.

In the Bashkir folk archaic epic “Ural-Batyr”, the rituals just cover all these reflections and are artistically revealed in all their fullness and diversity. Some important traditions, however, being a bit primitive, are mentioned at the very beginning of the epic:

...Донъя-мазар йыймаған,	They did not do the housekeeping,
Кашык-аяк тотмаған,	Did not get any dishes.
Казан асып, уг яғып,	The dough was not kneaded
Алар донъя кәтмәгән.	They did not hang up a boiler,
Ауырыу-һыҙлау күрмәгән,	So they lived
Үлем барын белмәгән	Without knowing diseases and ailments,

(Yuldybaeva, 2014, p. 147).

They did not know about death

(Telia, 2012, p. 265).

At first glance, a natural view of life and everyday life of an ancient person is depicted. In the artistic and aesthetic sense, the life of the heroes their way of life unusual for modern views is briefly and completely represented. Everything shows their traditional way of life and life experience, and it is clearly indicated that events are beginning to shape up in deeply ancient times.

Һунарза ат менмәгән,	They did not go hunting on horseback,
Кулға һазак тотмаған,	They did not take a bow and arrow in their hands,
Менәренә – арысланды,	Kept a lion for riding a horse,
Балығына – суртанды,	A pike to fish,
Кошка сөйгән шоңқарзы,	A falcon to hunt on birds,
Эте тоткан йәнлекте,	A leech to suck blood
Кан һурырға һөлөктө,	as equals to themselves
Үз иштәре яһаған...	(Telia, 2012, p. 266).

(Yuldybaeva, 2014, p.147).

An external observer can see the traditional hunting of an ancient man, who does not use hunting tools but applies the power of some animals that can catch, kill the less protected and weaker ones. The heroes themselves, as is known from the epic, moved on lions. This, as is known from the epic, was also a tradition for that era.

Since ancient times, the Bashkirs had a custom of cutting an animal or poultry, whose meat was used for food and distributed between family members depending on its gender, position in the clan or family. Thus, when a goose was cut, the head was given to a head of the family, the neck to a wife, wings to daughters, if any, the legs to sons, the carcass to guests. When cutting the meat of larger animals, for example, a tup, according to the traditions of many Turkic peoples (Kashgarsky, 1960), the head was given to a respected person at a meal, he cut off a piece of meat from it and passed it on in a circle, etc. This custom is fully represented in the Bashkir folk epic “Kungur-buga”, where an Aqsaqal cutting pieces of meat for everyone present at the meal, says (Sagitov, 1972):

Баш һөйәге башлауға,	Head bone to the most honorable,
Туларһығы – ташлауға,	Shin bone is to throw away,
Һум ите – ашауға,	Pulp is for treating,
Һөйәк алһаң – кимерергә,	If you get a bone, you need to gnaw it,
Елек тапһаң – һурырға,	If you get a bone marrow,
Кимерсәге – сәйнәргә.	you need to suck it,
Быныһы була муйыны,	Cartilage must be chewed.
Ете була быуыны;	This will be a neck
Алғы умыртка өләшлө,	It consists of seven parts,
Өләшлө ул килешле;	The anterior vertebra is the best
Ете киҫәк, ете быуын,	It is the best and most suitable;
Ала белһәң, үзеңә;	Seven vertebrae, seven knees
Арткы умыртка ун ике,	If you can get them, then they are yours;
Ала белһәң һинекә...	There are twelve back vertebrae,
Башын алып атайың,	If you can get them, then they are yours;
Ботон алып ағайың,	Your father will get the head,
Карындашың – аяғың,	Your uncle will get the thigh

Еңгәң алып тояғын  
(Telia, 2012, p. 295).

Sister will take a leg.

(Telia, 2012, p. 295).

This custom goes back to the ancient epic “Ural-Batyr”, which literally says the following:

... Бик борондан буғанмы,	... Either it has long been so
Йанбирзе үзе қылғанмы,	Or due to Yanbirde it became customary
Бара-тора шу ерзә	And over the years in that land
Йола булып киткәнме?	It became a custom,
Йыртқыс йәнлек тотто иһә,	If a wild beast is caught
Йәнлек иркәк булды иһә,	And the beast is male
Ирле, бисә икәүһе	Husband and wife
Башын сәйнәп ашаған,	Together eat his head
Шүлгән мән Уралға,	And The rest is given
Эте мән арысланға,	To Shulgen with the Urals,
Шоңкар мән суртанға	A dog with a lion
Калған яғын ташлаған;	Falcon with pike.
Йыртқыс йәнлекте тотһа,	And if a wild beast is caught,
Йәнлек орғасы буһа,	And the beast turns out to be a female,
Ирле-бисә икәүһе	Husband and wife
Йөрәгене һайлаған...	Take their heart

(Yuldybaeva, 2014, p. 147).

(Telia, 2012, p. 266).

As you can see, the husband and wife Yanbirde and Yanbike shared what they got during the hunt by gender. If it was male, they chose its head for themselves, and everything else was given to children and assistants during the hunt. If it was female, the adults ate its heart. The eaten head of the male and the heart of the female was very important for the hunter, who had apparently to have cold mind, be quick-witted and resourceful, while the heart gave stamina and courage. In artistic and aesthetic terms, this picture with a description of this ancient tradition, in general, enables to deduce about the strength and power, dexterity and foresight of Yanbird and Yanbike. Only under these circumstances it was possible to survive in those ancient, primitive times. Therefore, the epic does not particularly emphasize the description of the strength and dexterity of the heroes as hunters. Having depicted the ancient custom, whose echoes have survived up to present days, as a single whole without detaching from the nature and tradition of these people existence, it immediately becomes clear what kind of heroes-batyr, brave heroes they were. It is from such batyrs that true batyrs are born – the Ural and Shulgan, and later their sons Idel, Yaik, Nugush and Sakmar.

On the other hand, the ancients believed that the soul was in the head. However, it could also be in the blood. After all, the more blood was shed, the faster the soul left the body. In other words, a living creature being an animal or a person perished. Therefore, many peoples and religions believed in the connection of blood, life and soul, blood was believed to be the beginning and end. It was also believed that drinking someone’s blood meant becoming relatives. However, in this way you could absorb the strength of the enemy (an animal in this case) and thereby protect him after death.

In general, there are many different beliefs and myths about blood. Thus, the people believed that blood had magical powers. For example, the blood of cattle sacrificed for a wedding was smeared on the foreheads of children and adults who participated in the wedding event and the bride's mother hid a white rag dipped in this blood in a secluded place. And the blood itself was poured into places where no man had gone before, and the bones were put into flowing water, i.e. into the river.

The blood of the heart of such sacrificial cattle was added to homemade sausage named tulturm and wedding guests were treated with it, because they believed in the magical power of blood, which would bring happiness and prosperity to all participants of the feast.

There were many prohibitions associated with blood. Thus, for example, you could not step on a place where bloody droplets fell or blood was drained after the slaughter of livestock, its skinning, etc.; it was forbidden to climb a tree, into the base of whose crown the blood of a sacrificial animal was poured, etc.

In other words, folk believed that blood was the focus and symbol of life, the strength of the body and spirit, the abode of the soul. Blood had diverse ritual and magical functions, primarily the producing ones. It constituted the basis of the most important social institutions and concepts (consanguinity, blood feud, bloody sacrifice), etc. (Phraseological dictionary..., 2008).

In the epic "Ural-Batyr", many researchers, among other things, are also attracted by the motive of drinking blood, which is stated as follows:

...Үлән емшәр йән тотһа,	If a herbivore is caught,
Кара һөлөк қазаған,	A black leech will be put on it,
Һөлөгөнән һурзырып,	For the leech to suck blood.
Канды һыуһын яһаған.	Drinking is made from that blood.
Бала үсеп еткәнсе,	Until their children grew up,
Үзе йәнлек тоткансы,	Until they began to hunt the animals themselves,
Баш, йөрәкте ашаузан,	They forbade their sons
Һыуһынға кан эсеүзән	To eat the head and heart of the beast
Балаларын тыйғандар,	Drink its blood to quench thirst
Һис ярамай, тигәндәр	"Not allowed!"

(Yuldybaeva, 2014, p.147).

(Telia, 2012, p. 266).

In this case, the blood, apparently, was used for magical, ritual purposes, because they believed that it would give life energy, strength and power during the hunt. Children who did not reach a certain age and did not pass the initiation rite were forbidden to taste either the heart of the killed animal or its blood. According to ancient beliefs, a young man could only drink the blood of an animal killed by him. In other words, having passed the initiation, he could receive this right. Thus, the ancient ritual found its artistic and aesthetic reading assuming the form of a "prohibition" motive.

According to the laws of epic creativity, its aesthetics, the motive of "prohibition" was always followed by the motive of "the prohibition violation", which entails the motive of "punishment". In other words, a chain of folklore plot forming motives "Prohibition – Prohibition Violation – Punishment" was

interwoven into the plot, which contributed to the conflict emergence. In artistic terms, it served as a mechanism, a detonator, which accelerated the starting plot (Khubbitdinova, 2016).

This chain of motives, indeed, served as a detonator for the further development of the epic plot. The youngest son of Yanbirde and Yanbik Shulgen decided to try the forbidden blood, while his younger brother Ural refused to violate his father's prohibition. Violation of the prohibition inevitably followed a severe punishment, specifically, when father returned home he learnt about the deed and began to whip his sons with a cane. Having thought about the existence of Death, the Ural, without revealing the guilt of his brother and sharing his fate with him, said the following to his father:

... Бөгөн ағам үтерһән,	... If you kill my brother today,
Иртән мине үтерһән,	You kill me tomorrow
Балаларың үлгән һуң,	You will then be alone;
Яңғыз тороп калған һуң,	When old age comes
Картлығыңды күргән һуң,	You hunch down, you dry up,
Бөкөрәйеп, татарғап...	Don't you have to meet,
.....	That very evil Death
Үлем тигән яуызды	In your house, my father?
Каршы алыу торлакта	(Telia, 2012, p. 273).
Атай, туры килмәсме?!..	

(Yuldybaeva, 2014, p. 150).

Ural, then thinking more and more about Death, together with his brother goes to search it. Thus, thanks to the chain of motives "Prohibition – Prohibition Violation – Punishment", a conflict, whose solution is aimed at further development of the main plot of the epic, arises.

The theme of blood as a symbol of vitality and energy is often encountered in the epic "Ural-Batyr". Of particular interest is the episode in which Yaik, the son of Ural-batyr and the king Katil's daughter, whose name is unknown, enters into a dialogue with the blood or a lake of blood of four warriors enslaved by his grandfather. The image of Katil (means a murderer in Arabic) in the epic is personified with death, with the other world. In his kingdom the earth is covered with mountains of human bones and, as has been said, with blood, a black raven being a symbol of death is depicted on the banner, etc.

Ә, һез кандар – кан икән	Now I see you, blood!
Атам койған кан икән;	It turns out you were
Атам Урал килгәндә,	spilled by my father,
Яу аскандар һез икән,	My father, named Ural,
Батыр кулы тигәнгә	As it turns out he was declared war
Һыуырмаймы канығыз?	Isn't that why you don't cool down,
Каның бысрак буғанға,	blood,
Козғон да эсмәй, ер йотмай,	Because the batyr's hand touched you?
Күпсеп ята канығыз», –	Is it why
Тигән һүзем әйткәйнем,	do not you calm down?

Канлы бы күл кайнаны;  
Яман тауыш шауланы,  
Кан күленән ситтәрәк  
Бер ак ташка сәсрәгәс,  
Кан кыймылдай башланы,  
Серзе һөйләй башланы:  
“Оло бабаң Катилдың  
Коллап алған дүрт батыр,  
Бабаң кушқас, яу астык,  
Яуыз канға олғаштык;  
Ер зә эсмәй каныбыз,  
Көн киптермәй каныбыз,  
Козғондарзан хорайбыз,  
Алар за эсмәй каныбыз.  
Урал атаңа бар әле,  
Беззән сәләм әйт әле:  
Сара тапһын, терелтһен,  
Үзенә юлдаш булырлык  
Яуға сабыр ир итһен

(Yuldybaeva, 2014, p.180).

Since you are dirty blood  
The raven doesn't drink you  
the earth does not absorb you,  
You foam and do not dry,  
You are constantly tormented! –  
After I said it,  
A bloody puddle, boiling in a lake,  
Splattered on a white stone  
Which was aside from  
A bloody lake.  
Blood began to ripple  
She told me about her secret:  
“When your grandfather Katil  
Captivated us, four batyrs,  
We entered the battle by his order,  
That's why we turned  
into villainous blood,  
The earth does not absorb our blood,  
The sun does not drain our blood.  
We ask the crows  
But they do not drink our blood either;  
Our soul is breaking!  
Go to your father Ural,  
Tell him about our grief”

(Telia, 2012, p. 346).

There was so much unclean blood of the four batyrs that even a raven did not drink it, and it did not soak in the ground and a bright day neglected it, did not evaporate it. However, during the conversation, it turns out that the slaves asked Yaik to inform his father Ural to bring them back to life and to let them serve epy good and justice by taking his side. In this way, unclean blood was ready to be cleansed and reborn in the guise of batyrs for life and good. In the artistic, aesthetic, moral and ethical context, this scene in the epic expresses the law of the cycle of time, specifically, life re-emerges after death, luck is a cat, where blood symbolizes, as mentioned above, both the end and the beginning of all living things. The impure power achieves purification and takes the path of truth and goodness through repentance.

Only after repentance they did have a chance to regain their former appearance, the same raven brings them living water in its beak, injects it onto their blood, as a result of which four batyrs gained life. It is thought that it was water from the sacred source of Yәnsishmә (life-giving water). As F.A. Nadrshina notes, healing or returning to life with the help of life-giving water goes back to the ancient archaic beliefs that in the beginning of all that exists there was water, it is the fundamental principle of all living things (as

cited in Explanatory dictionary of the Bashkir language, 1993). Consequently, traditions and customs associated with belief in the power of blood and water have found their artistic representation here.

Limiting ourselves to considering only a few examples, which reflected the artistic and aesthetic use of motives, images associated with ancient folk beliefs in the mythical power and possibilities of blood, the customs of dividing the carcass of animals killed in hunting, the distribution of its parts between adults and children of heroes, etc. in the Bashkir archaic epic “Ural-Batyr”, I would like to say the following: in the ancient epic, the story moves not limited to the laws, the Constitution, statutes, pronounced moral and ethical principles. Traditions, customs, rituals, which later formed the basis of many universal rules, laws and statutes serve as the regulatory levers of the social system. At the heart of all this, as we understand from the epic, is parental love, education, respect, life credo being the restoration of goodness on earth. This is fully reflected in the speech of a thousand-year old man who drank Yanshishme from the living water and therefore never found peace in eternity:

Быуын-быуын буйына

Макталырлык икәнһең.

*1.1.1. Ил ырысын табырға*

Атаң һиңә кот биргән,

Әсәң һиңә һөт биргән;

Дошманға таш йөрәкле,

Дусыңа иш йөрәкле

Батыр итеп үстөргән

(Yuldybaeva, 2014, p.186).

You deserve to be

praised for generations.

To bring happiness to the country,

Your father gave you life

Mother gave you milk

Your heart is firm to enemies,

It is kind to friends,

Father and mother

raised you as Batyr

(Telia, 2012, p. 360).

And of course the old man, who has known all the ups and downs of fate, who has lived thousands of years, knows about those wisdom and knowledge about life, which has resulted in the epic in wise sayings about the good:

Донъяны матур төзөгән,

*1.1.2. Бакты мәңге бизәгән –*

У да булһа якшылык.

Күккә лә осор – якшылык,

Һыуға ла батмаҫ – якшылык,

Утка ла янмаҫ – якшылык,

Телдән дә төшмәҫ якшылык

(Yuldybaeva, 2014, p.187).

What is the beauty of the world

What decorates our garden?

It is the good.

The good will soar into the sky

The good will not drown in water

The good will not burn in the fire,

Speak of the good tirelessly

(Telia, 2012, p. 362).

These aphorisms, in general, represent the leitmotif of the epic “Ural-Batyr” and strike its ideological and artistic essence to the marrow. The elder’s lips express the meaning and concept of the epic work, represent the deeds and actions of the Ural-batyr being the bearer of all the qualities of the good and justice.

#### **4. Purpose of the Study**

**The purpose of the article** was the need to reveal the artistic originality of the ancient folk rituals and customs, which will make it possible to deeper and more comprehensively show both the nature of these ancient traditions and their artistic, poetic values and characteristics.

#### **5. Research Methods**

In the course of the research, the article used folkloristic, comparative methods of analysis using an analytical approach to solving tasks.

#### **6. Findings**

As a result of the research, it was found in the article that the pictures of customs reflected the traditional way of life, daily routine and life experience of the ancient Bashkirs. In artistic terms, they as motives or images fulfill important ideological, artistic, aesthetic functions. This is the custom of sharing the carcass of an animal during a meal between family members, the sacred semantics of the symbolism of blood in the beliefs of the characters associated with the initiation rite of young people, etc. Consequently, the regulating levers of the social system in general and of an individual family in particular in the epic are traditions, customs, rituals, which later formed the basis of many universal rules, laws and regulations.

#### **7. Conclusion**

Thus, the epic “Ural-Batyr” found artistic and aesthetic representation, ideological and thematic reflection of the traditions, rituals and customs of the people, their beliefs and worldview. It was found, as exemplified by the above images and motives, that they, having originated in ancient times, artistically represented in the archaic epic, cast forward nowadays, still preserved both in life and daily routine, the views and beliefs of many Turkic peoples, the Bashkirs in particular. The study of the artistic and aesthetic originality of rituals, customs, beliefs, moral and ideological foundations of the people in their epic heritage will in many ways allow considering the epic in all its diversity and originality and understand how ancient traditions have survived nowadays.

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