MOTIF INDEX OF PROPHETIC DREAM NARRATIVES: METHODS OF COMPILATION

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Abstract: The article proposes methods for describing and classifying invariant structures of stories about prophetic dreams in the form of a motif index. The author raises the question of what elements of prophetic dream narratives can be defined as folkloric and introduces a classification system of prophetic dream narratives (according to their invariants). Revealing invariants (narrative structures) in the prophetic dream narratives allows the author to create a motif index, which lets us understand the traditional logic of dream interpretation: the rules of generating prophetic dream narratives and the 'narrative grammar' lying in the core of stories about prophetic dreams. The motif index covers stories about prophetic dreams recorded by ethnographers and folklorists in the Eastern Slavic regions from the early twentieth century to 2020.

Keywords: prophetic dream narratives, motif index, narrative structures, semiotic analysis, invariants and variants, Eastern Slavs, oral tradition, dreams as folklore, symbolism of dreams, dream interpretation

The article presents methods for compiling the motif index of prophetic dream narratives. The index is not just a dictionary or thesaurus that helps navigate the accumulated material. It is an analytical tool that classifies and systematizes all these texts, following common principles. The motif index allows putting newly recorded texts into the developed coordinate system.[1]

The folklorists who have researched oral tales have paid attention to their similarities, common motifs, and plot structures. The Finnish scholars belonging to the geographic-historic school proposed the idea of the monogenesis of such texts from the once invented variant (Jason 2000: 24–25). Antti Aarne elaborated the tale type to reveal the original form of fairytales having a similar plot. Even though this idea was rejected, folklorists continued compiling the indexes (and tale types) and using the previous ones. The indexes allow systematizing the

vast number of recorded texts, describing them from the general plot structures to particular plots (Jason 2000: 63). In her book, Heda Jason published the list of indexes compiled by folklorists from different countries during the twentieth century (Jason 2000: 159–222).[2] Folklore researchers made indexes even for such narrowly thematic narratives as biographies of troubadours, humorous stories about priests, and legends about giants. But there are no mentions of any motif indexes of stories about dreams.

In the twentieth century, folklorists pretty rarely considered dream narratives as folklore. According to psychoanalytic theory, dream stories were usually regarded as reflections of unconsciousness (individual desires and fears), as well as humans' universals (principles of 'dream work'). Even social and cultural anthropologists of the first half of the twentieth century researching stories about dreams told by natives (prophetic, shamanic, or incubated through traditional ritual dreams) focused on finding Freudian symbols in the dream plots (Seligman 1928; Lincoln 2003; Róheim 1949; Eggan 1952). In other words, dream narratives were by default understood as something utmost personal, an opposite to folklore texts, which are shared by a group. Thus, American folklorist Alan Dundes, defining the concept of 'folklore', spoke of 'individual dreams' as the complete opposite of 'collective folklore'. He wrote:

> *Collective folklore differs from individual dreams. Dreams appear to be similar to narratives in part because they are related in words. But a dream may or may not be sufficiently intelligible or interesting to be related by a second party to a third party.* (Dundes 1976: 1501)

At first, folklorists examined folk beliefs about dreams (primarily the notion that dream images have a meaning and can predict the future), not the dream narratives themselves. The investigation of the folk tradition of dream interpretation within the framework of folklore studies began with so-called oral dream books – lists of separately taken prophetic symbols well known in folk culture, for example, *berries (in a dream) portend tears*, *a canvas foreshadows the road*, *a cow stands for illness*, and so on. Scholars collected them to consider their mythological origin (Tolstoi 1993) or reveal cultural values and stereotypes reflected by these symbols and their meaning (Niebrzegowska 1996). Meanwhile, the process of dream interpretation was by default understood as simply detaching these conventional symbols and regarding them separately from the whole dream plot. So, other details of dream narratives, except these traditional images, were usually seen as irrelevant to folklore studies.

Folklorists also examined dream descriptions included in texts of various genres. For example, some fairytales mention dreams of characters (Bogatyrev

2006; Gulyás 2007), or sometimes legends contain depictions of dream plots that are parts of the whole story (Ettlinger 1948). So, we can find some prophetic dream motifs in indexes devoted to the systematization of texts of different genres. There are several motifs of prophetic dreams in S. Thompson's index, aimed at the "classification of narrative elements in folktales, ballads, myths, fables, medieval romances, exempla, fabliaux, jest-books, and local legends" (Thompson 1955–1958). For example, "Dream tells of safety of absent person who has been in danger" (ThMot D1810.8.2.4), "Dream warns of illness or injury" (ThMot D1810.8.3.1.1.), "Dream warns of danger which will happen in near future" (ThMot D1810.8.3.2.), "Dream by a (pregnant) woman about fate of her unborn child" (ThMot D1812.3.3.8), "Bad dream as evil omen" (ThMot D1812.5.1.2). Russian folklorists often included a few very general descriptions of narratives about dreams in collections of demonic legends (Zinoviev 1987; Cherepanova 1996; Drannikova & Razumova 2009; Vlasova 2013). Some motifs of prophetic dreams are mentioned in Valerij Zinoviev's index of plots and motifs of demonic legends (section "Omens") (Zinoviev 1987: 320). However, as in Thompson's index, these texts are poorly presented there. Zinoviev mentioned only three motifs: "a girl saw her future husband in a dream", "a person saw a bad dream – misfortune happened", "a person saw in a dream what would happen in reality". So, scholars used to attribute stories about prophetic dreams to different genres (regarding 'a prophetic dream' only as a topic, which can be included in various types of folklore texts), not considering them as a particular group of narratives having their own features.

In the last decades, dream telling was more often examined as a communicative practice (Tedlock 1991; Vann & Alperstein 2000; Kilroe 2000), not only the phenomenon of an individual psyche. Anthropologists argue that "the 'remembering' of dreams is not strictly limited to the telling of the 'actual' dream" (Kilborne 1981: 175), "the dreamer 'remembers' the dream as a retrospective reconstruction, organized by the narrative conventions of the dreamer's language and culture" (Mannheim 1991: 48). The boundaries of folklore studies have also been expanding. Contemporary folklorists pay attention to personal experience narratives, admitting that "everyday" stories also contain cultural-specific clichés and elements of the mythological picture of the world. Finnish folklorist A. Kaivola-Bregenhøj in her article "Dreams as Folklore" reasoned that personal dream narratives could be regarded as a part of folklore (Kaivola-Bregenhøj 1993: 211). She argued:

> *Dream narration and interpretation bear many of the characteristics of*
> *folklore: dreams ... contain both idiosyncratic symbols, and symbols that*
> *are culture-bound, anonymous in origin, highly stereotyped and passed*

> *on from one person to another … Dreams have so far been studied as*
> *communal elements of culture chiefly by the anthropologists, but dreams*
> *and their narration are also an interesting field for the folklore researcher.*
> (Kaivola-Bregenhøj 1993: 211)

Today, more and more works have appeared that consider stories about dreams as objects for narrative research. However, the problem of the description and systematization of dream narratives, and finding their place among other groups of folklore texts remains.

Because the article focuses on Eastern Slavic materials, I will pay particular attention to Russian and Ukrainian publications that concern prophetic dream narratives as cultural phenomena within the framework of folkloristics. The first Russian studies of dream narratives as a cultural phenomenon appeared in the 2000s.[3] E. Zhivitsa attempted to describe prophetic dream narratives in the form of an index (Zhivitsa 2005: 164–165). Similar to Valerij Zinoviev she regarded these texts as a subgroup of demonic legends (Zhivitsa 2005: 158). So, she systematized motifs of prophetic dreams according to the principles of systematization of demonic legends. For example, Valerij Zinoviev and Svetlana Aivazian divided their indexes into sections (characters) and subsections (typical actions or manifestations of each character) (Zinoviev 1987: 305–321; Aivazian 1975: 162–182).

Zhivitsa's index also includes three sections devoted to dream characters:
1) the dreamer and people from real life;
2) symbolic characters (a woman, a deceased person);
3) animals.

But prophetic dream plots differ from plots of demonic legends. The latter include a description of contact between a specific demonic creature and a hero. The number of demonic characters is limited. Every creature performs a set of typical actions in relation to the hero. That is why we can easily classify the plots of demonic legends according to characters and their actions. However, in the plots of prophetic dreams, we can hardly find a stable and limited group of characters.[4] E. Zhivitsa chose the dream characters pretty arbitrarily. For example, inside the section "symbolic characters", we can find the subsection "a woman". But female characters in prophetic dream narratives do not have such specific characteristics as, for example, "a mermaid" or "a witch" in demonic legends. So, we cannot single out a group of narratives about prophetic dreams in which all female characters have a specific set of functions and features.

Almost the same categories of dream characters are distinguished by psychologists K. Hall and R. van de Castle, who created a method of content analysis of dream plots:

1) people (acquaintances / strangers, women / men, etc.);
2) animals;
3) mythological creatures (Domhoff 1996: 13–15).

At the same time, the classification of psychologists was developed, based on the analysis of ordinary dream reports (recorded from students), not stories about prophetic dreams. This correlation shows that there is no specific character system in prophetic dream narratives. The main principle of motif description in Zhivitsa's index ("character + action") led to such clumsy constructions as "an animal is inactive" (Zhivitsa 2005: 165). This motif was found in the texts where actions of an animal were merely not mentioned, because the interpretation of a dream was based on other details of a plot.

After the list of characters was complete, the author added the last section of the index ("natural and material objects"). In this section, she described as motifs single symbols (not only material objects) mentioned in prophetic dream narratives. For example, "whirlwind", "land", "vegetable garden", "cemetery", "church", etc. (Zhivitsa 2005: 165). Several other researchers followed the same logic. Gennadij Berestnev proposed to create a "new corpus dictionary of dreams". It was supposed to be a collection of stories about prophetic dreams, including the attached list of symbols with links to the texts in which they are mentioned (Berestnev 2013). Ukrainian folklorists T. Shevchuk and Y. Stavitska published archival records of prophetic dream narratives. They added an index of signs and symbols (objects, characters, actions) at the end of their book (Shevchuk & Stavitska 2017: 212–222). It lists the symbols mentioned in dream narratives, in most cases in the form of nouns, such as "war", "wreath", "wolf", etc. Such subject headings allow navigating the published materials more quickly. But they cannot solve the problem of classifying and systematizing narratives about prophetic dreams.

Elena Zhivitsa and other researchers regarded separately taken symbols or fragments of the dream plots, such as "an animal produces offspring", "women waving handkerchiefs" (Zhivitsa 2005: 165). Those ways of description partly correspond with the methods of describing plots and motifs of demonic legends developed by Zinoviev (character + its actions), and partly with the idea that the essential part of a prophetic dream narrative is a conventional symbol from oral dream books (not a motif or a plot). But it is important to take into account that dream narratives differ from both of these genres, nevertheless combining characteristics of both of them. They are complex narratives (as legends

are). At the same time, they consist of two parts: a dream plot and its meaning (which resembles oral dream book formulas). Like other folklore genres, dream narratives are constructed by the rules existing in oral tradition. But unlike such genres as fairytales, epics, or legends, the main idea of a prophetic dream narrative is not to tell a story but to interpret this story as an omen. A narrator presents a connection between a dream plot and a real event, which is not always obvious. This also distinguishes prophetic dream narratives from other folklore stories about visions or supernatural experience (contemplating another world or otherworldly beings). The latter also contain interpretations, but the meaning of the story is usually omitted (not spoken out) because of its obviousness to listeners. For example, a visionary observes the punishments of sinners in the other world – the main idea of such a narrative is to convince listeners to live a righteous life (everyone understands this didactic sense, even though the narrator does not say that directly). In the prophetic dream narratives, the interpretation is the central item of the narrative. Dreamers are not interested in a dream plot itself – they wonder what it means (what it predicts for them if we talk about folk tradition of dream interpretation). The correlation between a dream plot and reality is the main idea of such narratives. A dream plot is a riddle to solve, and the traditional ways of constructing prophetic dream narratives reflect the ways of solving this riddle.

Therefore, the description of a real-life event predicted by the dream is an integral part of each story about a prophetic dream, which cannot be cut off during the analysis or systematization of such texts. The specific two-part structure of prophetic dream narratives, which reflect the main idea of comparing the dream world and reality, allows us to speak about the peculiarity of these texts against the background of other folklore genres.

To compile a motif index of prophetic dream narratives, I started from the point that prophetic dream narratives are a specific genre, not a subgroup of legends or other types of texts. Therefore, it is necessary to develop principles suitable for describing these narratives. Any classification should be based upon carefully defined structural units of folklore texts and not contain the element of arbitrariness (Dundes 1962: 98–99; Jason 2000: 29). So, if we want to describe prophetic dream narratives in the form of an index, we should reveal repetitive narrative structures in these texts. As I have noted before, the general distinctive characteristic of prophetic dream narratives is their two-part structure. I applied the structural semiotic method to make a typology of prophetic dream narratives, revealing repetitive structures and their semantics in these texts. The structural semiotic analysis allows identifying the plot invariants of prophetic dream stories and presenting them as a coherent system of dream interpretation.

THE METHODS OF DESCRIPTION OF MOTIFS IN THE INDEX

The major part of stories about prophetic dreams is individual narratives. However, they contain folklore motifs and unique (not folkloric) details of a dream plot. The latter will be omitted if a story of a prophetic dream is transmitted and narrated many times. So how could we highlight the traditional motifs in the detailed personal narrative? At first glance, folkloric motifs are repetitive elements of a plot. This criterion is valid for many folklore narratives. But if we talk about dreams, we should notice that the repetitive elements of dream plots were also studied by psychologists (beginning from Freud), who defined them as typical dreams. Describing typical dreams, psychologists spoke about cultural universals because these elements manifested in the same way in the dreams of people from different cultures (Griffith & Miyagi & Tago 1958: 1173–1174). So how could we discern cultural universals and cultural patterns in dream narratives?

I assume that dream narratives become "culture patterned"[5] after and because of their interpretation. Erika Bourguignon, an anthropologist who researched the dream interpretation tradition of Haiti, noticed that interpretations (including those of dreams) reflect the traditional worldview:

> *To make sense of the new we must draw on the old. The unfamiliar and strange is understood by using the known and familiar. … In each case, these interpretations reflected the observers' own understandings of the world … They would draw on the same understandings in the interpretation of their dreams or those of others.* (Bourguignon 2003: 152–153)

In my previous works, I have shown that the traditional models of dream interpretation influence not only the way people understand the 'message' of a dream plot. They also determine the way people describe their dream experiences (Lazareva 2018: 84–89). So, revealing these models is not only about the meaning which people attach to their dream plots. It is about how personal dream experience becomes a stereotyped folklore story.

That is why I suggest defining repetitive motifs of dreams as folkloric if we can trace the same logic of their interpretation for a group of prophetic dream narratives. In order to explain what I mean by the folkloric motif of a prophetic dream narrative and give a more precise definition of this term, I will turn to two definitions of a motif. The first one was offered by Eleazar Meletinskii. He wrote that we could regard a motif as a "micro-plot" and compare its structure with structures of sentences (or utterances) (Meletinskii 1983: 117–118). I do

not follow the full definition of motif offered by Meletinskii, which is much more detailed. But I cite him in order to emphasize that, describing motifs of prophetic dream plots, I am looking for repetitive structures (resembling structures of sentences), not separate images and symbols (single words). Igor Silantiev wrote about the "semantic integrity" of a motif. It means that a motif cannot be divided into parts without losing its meaning (Silantiev 1999: 70). Giving my own definition of a motif, which should be applicable for the motifs of prophetic dreams, I draw on the works of both scholars. I reveal in narratives about prophetic dreams the repetitive plot structures ("micro-plots" as they were defined by Meletinskii (1983)), having the same semantics ("semantic integrity"), in other words – common logic of interpretation.

That is why my motif index of prophetic dream narratives differs from the previous ones. For example, E. Zhivitsa includes in her index the motif "a dreamer is naked". However, we cannot regard such an element of dream plots by itself as a folklore motif. Psychologists have described the 'typical dream' about public nakedness of a dreamer many times (Freud 2010 [1899]: 260–261; Saul 1966; Myers 1989; Fromm 1951: 73–78). But if we examine the traditional ways of interpretation of dreams about nakedness, we will see that they differ from each other in the following:

1) in some texts, nakedness is interpreted as a prediction of illness or death to a person seen naked. Nakedness in these texts is regarded as a disadvantage, weakness;

2) in other texts, being naked predicts dishonor. Being naked means looking inappropriate and is associated with public condemnation.

So, it makes sense to talk about two motifs in this case:

1) a person (or a dreamer) was naked in a dream – he or she became ill or died in reality;

2) a dreamer (or a person) was naked in a dream – he or she was condemned and felt shame in reality.

In other words, I consider as a motif not a single dream image or detail of a dream plot, but the structure of a whole narrative, including a dream plot and its interpretation. So, the motif index shows us that symbolism of a dream cannot be reduced to symbolism of a single image like it is presented in so-called oral dream books (for example, "a coffin in dreams predicts death"). The whole plot structure is significant for the interpreter.

The invariants of dream plots that have a common logic of interpretation can also be defined as interpretational models, because they are used as some kind of samples by dream interpreters and dream tellers. So, these narrative

structures can be described as frameworks on which the details of individual dream plots are built up. The description of these stable narrative structures makes it possible to visualize how the stories about prophetic dreams are generated – in other words, how people interpret their dreams and how this interpretation makes dream narratives typical.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MOTIFS AND TYPES OF PROPHETIC DREAMS

Speaking about my designation of revealed narrative structures as motifs (not types), I want to point out that my motif definition also differs from that of Thompson's. Thompson described a motif as "the smallest element in a tale having a power to persist in tradition" and a tale type as "a traditional tale that has an independent existence" (Thompson 1946: 415). This distinction is not applicable to the analysis of prophetic dream narratives. In the case of prophetic dream narratives, we should draw the line between prophetic symbols (for example, "blood" or "bright moon") and narrative structures. Symbols can be meaningful details inside a plot structure, and they are the smallest elements of the prophetic dream narratives that persist in tradition. However, I do not think we can define symbols as motifs.

My research aimed to extract and systematize the smallest repetitive plot structures having stable semantics. I determined them as motifs (not types, despite the fact that they can describe the entire structure of a brief dream narrative) because I suppose that we can reveal the number of sustainable combinations of these motifs. So, the term "tale types" will be more relevant for describing repeated sequences of simple (non-dividable) motifs in the future. I argue that there are three levels of prophetic dreams description and systematization:

1) **conventional symbol** – the smallest element in a prophetic dream narrative;

2) **motif** – the smallest repetitive narrative structure having stable semantics (= independent existence);

3) **type** – repeated sequences or combinations of motifs (in other words, the sustainable ways that elementary structures of prophetic dream plots form more complex ones).

THE DATA SYSTEMATIZED IN THE INDEX

In the motif index, I described oral stories about dreams regarded as symbolic predictions of the future, recorded by ethnographers and folklorists in Eastern Slavic regions from the early twentieth century to the current time, including materials published in 2020. The key sources are articles, theses, books authored by Russian and Ukrainian ethnographers and folklorists, devoted to researching and publishing dream narratives (Lurye & Chereshnya 2000; Dmitrenko 2005; Antsibor 2015; Safronov 2016; Shevchuk & Stavitska 2017; Stavitska 2018; Lazareva 2018, etc.). I also used materials collected by the students of the Center for Social Anthropology of the Russian State University for the Humanities (Kishkina & Meshcheriakova & Krasnova 2020; Krasnova 2020; Meshcheriakova 2020).

The texts described in the index were collected in:
- **Ukraine** (Zhytomyr, Khmelnytskyi, Lviv, Ternopil, Ivano-Frankivsk, Vinnytsia, Volyn, Kyiv, Chernihiv, Poltava, Kharkiv, Donetsk, Luhansk, Kherson, Mykolaiv regions);
- **The European part of Russia** (Arkhangelsk, Vologda, Novgorod, Leningrad, Moscow, Tver, Belgorod, Bryansk, Ivanovo, Rostov, Tula, Oryol, Yaroslavl, Astrakhan, Volgograd, Krasnodar, Ulyanovsk regions) and several other Russian regions (Kirov, Chuvash, Tyumen, Penza, Trans-Baikal regions);
- **Belarus** (Mogilev, Brest, Gomel regions).

As we see, most of the materials were recorded in Ukraine and the European part of Russia. The Belarus material is underrepresented in the index because I could not find any substantial publications of prophetic dream narratives collected in Belarus.

When compiling the index, I draw my attention to mechanisms of 'decoding' of dream plots. So, I did not consider narratives about dreams that contain no prediction. For the same reason, I did not describe narratives of prophetic dreams which were interpreted literally, when the dreamed plot was repeated in real life. For example, somebody died in a dream, and then that person died in reality. The ways of interpreting such dreams are transparent.

The dream plots are systematized according to narrative structures lying in their core. That is why I did not describe stories about prophetic dreams that are too short and explain the meaning of a single image (a fish, an apple, and so on), which is not a part of a complex dream plot.

I described invariants of prophetic dream narratives in the form of *a dream plot (structure) – its semantic (the real-life) event*. So, I did not pay any particular

attention to 'incubated' dreams (that a dreamer saw after special rituals made to provoke a prophetic dream). Such narratives should be described in a slightly different way: their description should include the ritual actions performed by the dreamer before going to sleep.

For the same reason, I did not pay particular attention to dreams that provoked a dreamer to take some actions. For example, a dream character advised changing the job. The dreamer quit the job and found a new one. That helped them to avoid problems (Zaporozhets 2002: 99). In this case, the ways of correlating between a dream plot and real-life events are more complicated than the scheme "something was dreamt about – something happened". These narratives have another structure, which can be described as: "something was dreamt about – *the dreamer reacted in a certain way to the dream* – as a result of this, something happened". For this reason, such texts require specific research.

THE STRUCTURE OF THE MOTIF INDEX (THE TYPOLOGY OF MOTIFS)

The index is divided into 8 major sections:

A – Appearance and attributes of the dreamer (dream characters);
B – Actions of the dreamer (dream characters);
C – Emotions of the dreamer;
D – Sensations of the dreamer;
E – Verbal images (statements, thoughts, inscriptions, dialogues);
F – Objects (characteristics and metamorphoses);
G – Number of objects (dream characters, repetitions of actions);
H – Space (metamorphosis of milieu, movement in the territory).

The most frequent motif of many prophetic dreams is a metamorphosis of familiar milieus, objects, and people's appearances. For example, places can look unusual, objects can disappear or be lost/destroyed. People can have a strange appearance or attributes, or they can do strange things in dream plots. Such transformations are often regarded as omens. So, mentions of familiar loci, objects, and people were taken as the coordinate axes of the motif index.

The motifs from sections **A**, **F**, and **H** can be described as "something familiar (a person, object or milieu) looks unusual in a dream – something happens in the life of a certain person". Predictions of such prophetic dream plots concern the person who looked unusual in a dream or possesses the objects (or territory) looking strange in a dream.

The majority of the motifs within section **B** ("Actions…") can be described by the scheme "the dreamer or a person (familiar to the dreamer) is doing something – something happens to the dreamer / this person". Actions performed on familiar objects or aimed at transforming a familiar territory are included in sections **F** ("Objects…") and **H** ("Space…").

The motifs from sections **C** ("Emotions…") and **D** ("Sensations…") can be described as "the dreamer feels something (emotion or sensation) – something happens to the dreamer in reality".

Sections **E** ("Verbal images…") and **G** ("Number…") are based on such abstract categories as words and numbers. But the vast majority of the narratives described in these sections mention familiar objects, places, and people. And it is meaningful for the interpretation of dreams. For example, words that are said in a dream are usually addressed to a dreamer or to a familiar person (or they are said by a dreamer / familiar person, or a real person is mentioned in a speech). And it matters to whom the words are addressed, or who speaks, or who is mentioned in the utterance. These details show whom the prediction concerns. The narratives systematized in section **G** are not only about the number of objects (or repetition of actions). The information about a real person who repeated actions several times or who possesses several objects in a dream is no less meaningful.

The description of motifs starts from the general level (plot structures) and ends with particular examples (references to specific plots). Motifs (invariants) are described in subsections from more generalized forms (which are common to a big group of texts) to particular subgroups (which can be regarded as different variants of the common invariant). The further systematization represents a more detailed description of the revealed text structures ending with references to particular narratives about prophetic dreams recorded by folklorists. For example, the most general description of the model that lies in the core of a group of prophetic dream narratives is "objects as symbols of people (their owners)". The next level of concretization is to display categories of objects which usually symbolize people in dreams – houses, trees, personal items, raw meat, and heavenly bodies (this list is potentially open to expansion). The next step is to make more elaborated descriptions of structures common to groups of prophetic dream plots. For example, a tree dies in someone's garden – the owner of the garden dies (or gets ill). This plot structure is implemented in personal prophetic dream narratives in many ways. For example, the different sorts of a tree can be mentioned, the tree can be damaged in different ways (it can wither, be cut down or burnt, etc.), different persons die in reality (close or far relatives, friends, neighbors, acquaintances of the dreamer, etc.), but the general structure remains the same. The relations between the plot structure

(a tree dies in someone's garden – the owner of the garden dies) and its implementation (for example, the apricot tree from the garden of the dreamer withers – the dreamer's husband dies) can be regarded as a relation between *invariant* and *variant* or, according to Alan Dundes' definitions – *motifeme* and *allomotif* (Dundes 1962: 102–103).

Such a hierarchical organization of the index corresponds with the idea that we can reduce a group of folklore texts to a general schema, the carcass lying in their core. This approach was presented in the work of V. Propp, who described the general structure of fairytales (Propp 1958) developed by many other scholars, applying structural analysis to different types of texts (Dundes 1962; Greimas & Porter 1977, etc.). A. Lord wrote about the "grammar" of oral poetry, which he described as "a special grammar within the grammar of language" (Lord 2000 [1960]: 36). He wrote that "the formulas are the phrases and clauses and sentences of this specialized narrative grammar", and the singer learns to perform not by memorizing them but by understanding their habitual usage (ibid.). In this article I argue that we can look at prophetic dream narratives in much the same way. The dream interpreter knows the principles of traditional dream interpretation as a sort of language, including "words" and "grammar". To use this language (and therefore be able to interpret any dream), it is not sufficient to memorize the meaning of a bunch of well-known prophetic symbols ("words"). The interpreter should understand the narrative structures inherent in prophetic dream plots ("grammar"). The traditional dream interpretation is a process of finding these patterns in the chaotic dream plot (and then reducing the whole plot to them). There are sets of prophetic symbols most often appearing in the framework of each narrative structure, but these structures could be filled with any images. Symbols could replace each other, but the structures remain. That is why every personal dream plot containing original imagery can be interpreted in the traditional way.

The analysis of dream narratives shows that dreamers usually interpret a distorted image of reality (according to folklore models), not abstract symbols. Of course, there are some narratives of prophetic dreams with no references to familiar objects, people, and places. However, their plot structures correspond to the schemes described for dream plots containing elements from reality, which play a key role in the dream interpretation.

For example, you will see the motif F.1.1.3.2 in the fragment from the index published in this article, "someone's personal item (or other material object) drowns in a river (or floats away by water) – a person dies". Usually, the dreamers see an object belonging to their family members (or their own object), and the dream about its disappearing in water predicts the death of the person who possesses the object. If the object belongs to the dreamer, this dream 'predicts'

the loss of a family member or close friend of the dreamer. But in some cases, the drowning objects have no owners. For example, *a black cloud* that falls into the river predicts the death of the dreamer's son (Krasikov 2005: 217). In this case, the structure of the prophetic dream plot and the logic of its interpretation remain the same. We can conclude that all narratives presented in the subsection F.1.1.3.2 belong to the same type. The only difference between them is the extent of familiarity (or 'abstractiveness') of images seen in a dream. This conclusion concerns all the texts systematized in the index.

Why then did I create the typology of motifs based on the correlation between images seen in dreams and their prototypes in reality? As I said, the vast majority of prophetic dream narratives contain mentions of familiar images. By analyzing the narrative schemes of dreams about metamorphoses of objects existing in reality (people, places), we can reveal the narrative structures that are also applicable for interpreting dreams containing 'abstract' (not familiar for a dreamer) images. At the same time, it is impossible to derive invariants of the whole corpus of prophetic dream narratives from analyzing a few narratives where only 'abstract' symbols are mentioned. The interpretation of the first ones is more complex because it includes connotations of a familiar object (its belonging, characteristics, location in space, etc.) which determine the meaning of a dream.

In order to illustrate the explanations of how the motif index is organized, I would like to introduce one of the sections of the motif index. The index was published in my book (Lazareva 2020a: 187–231). Here is the translation from Russian of a fragment from it (with some small corrections), section **F** (ibid.: 216–222).

THE FRAGMENT OF THE MOTIF INDEX

Abbreviations

A dash "–" connects brief descriptions of dream motifs (left side) and their semantics (right side). We can replace it with the phrase "the dream is interpreted as". Words "in the dream" or "in real life" and their synonyms are omitted.

S – the dreamer

R – a person familiar to the dreamer

U – a dead person

N – "someone": the personality of a dream character does not matter for interpreting the dream (or it could be any real person or character), or we are talking about a character unfamiliar to the dreamer

F. Objects (their characteristics and metamorphoses)

F.1. objects as symbols of people (their owners)

F.1.1. the object (belonging to S/R) is ruined or lost – S/R dies (gets ill, suffers)
F.1.1.1. the house (of the dreamer or a neighbor of the dreamer)
F.1.1.1.1. the house of S/R is destroyed (dirty, in decline) – S/R dies (gets ill, suffers)
   – the house of R is destroyed – R dies (Poltava region) (Lazareva 2018: 66–68)
   – the house of R is in decline (dirty, rotten) – R dies or gets ill (Leningrad, Nikolaev, Kyiv, Poltava regions) (Lurye & Chereshnya 2000: № 36; Antsibor 2015: 200; Lazareva 2018: 70)
   – the house of R needs renovation – R gets ill (Poltava region) (Lazareva 2018: 69)
   – the house of S is smeared with soot – S is arrested (Khmelnytskyi region) (Shevchuk & Stavitska 2017: 139)

F.1.1.1.2. the stove (in the house of S/R) is destroyed – S/R dies (or gets ill)
   – the stove in the house of S is destroyed – a relative (the husband, the children) of S dies (Tver, Kyiv regions) (Lurye & Chereshnya 2000: № 30; Ivannikova 2005: 192–193)
   – the stove in the house of S crumbles in half – the brother of S dies (Ulyanovsk region) (Safronov 2016: 487)
   – the stove in the house of R is destroyed – R dies (Zhytomyr, Poltava regions) (Shevchuk & Stavitska 2017: 120; Lazareva 2018: 90–91)

F.1.1.2. a tree (growing in someone's garden)
F.1.1.2.1. a tree (in the garden of S/R) dies – S/R dies (or gets ill)
   – the apple tree in the garden of R is cut down – the son of R dies (Novgorod region) (Lurye & Chereshnya 2000: № 22)
   – the apricot tree in the garden of S withers – the husband of S dies (Kherson region) (Stavitska 2018: 273)
   – the apricot tree in the garden of S is cut down – the husband of S dies (Kherson region) (Stavitska 2018: 273–274)
   – the oak in the garden of R disappears from its usual place – R dies (Poltava region) (Lazareva 2018: 116–117)
   – a blossoming apple tree has a burnt root – the grandson of S (a young man) dies (Lazareva 2017: 147–148)

F.1.1.3. a personal item (material object)
F.1.1.3.1. a thing (personal item of S / R) is lost – R (or a relative or friend of S) dies (or gets ill)

– the clothes (the jacket, the sweater) of R are lost – R dies (Northwest Russia, Kirovsk region) (Razumova 2001: 102–103; Lazareva 2018: 76)
– the handbag of S is lost – a friend of S dies (Poltava region) (Lazareva 2018: 183)
– the gloves of S are lost – the brother of S dies (Vlasova 2013: 15)
– the shoes of S are lost – a friend of S dies (Belgorod region) (Krasikov 2005: 216)
– the galosh of S is lost – the husband of S dies (Kherson region) (Stavitska 2018: 274)
– the gold jewelry of S is lost – the mother of S gets ill (Moscow) (Kishkina & Meshcheriakova & Krasnova 2020: 6)
– the carpet is missing in its usual place in the house of S – the husband of S dies (Poltava region) (Lazareva 2018: 120)

F.1.1.3.2. a personal item of R / S (or any material object) drowns in a river (or floats away by water) – R (or a relative of S) dies
F.1.1.3.2.1. an object belonging to R drowns in a river – R dies

– the handkerchief of R drowns in the river – R dies (Poltava region) (Lazareva 2018: 78)

F.1.1.3.2.2. a personal item of S (or any material object) drowns in a river (or floats away by water) – a relative of S dies

– the headscarf of S drowns in the river – the daughter of S dies (Ulyanovsk region) (Safronov 2016: 488)
– two chests that belong to S float down a river – the husband and the son-in-law of S die (Zhytomyr, Poltava regions) (Shevchuk & Stavitska 2017: 91)
– two boats are carried off to the sea – two people die (Northwest Russia) (Razumova 2001: 100)
– a log (a shovel) sinks in the water – a member of the family of S dies (Tver region) (Lurye & Chereshnya 2000: № 4, 39)
– a black cloud falls into the river – the son of S drowns (Kharkiv region) (Krasikov 2005: 217)

F.1.1.3.3. a personal item of S / R (or any material object) is damaged / destroyed – R dies (gets ill, suffers)

– the dress of R is rotten – R is unhappy in marriage (Tver region) (Lurye & Chereshnya 2000: № 38)

– the wheelchair of R breaks into small pieces – R dies (Moscow) (Zaporozhets 2002: 101)

F.1.1.4. raw meat

F.1.1.4.1. raw meat (a corpse) gives signs of life – R/S dies (or gets ill)
– pieces of dead people's bodies are stirring in a meat store – a typhus epidemic begins; S gets seriously ill (Zhytomyr region) (Shevchuk & Stavitska 2017: 124)
– a piece of raw meat breathes – a relative of S dies (Northwest Russia) (Razumova 2001: 95)

F.1.1.4.2. raw meat is baked/taken away – R dies (or gets ill)
– raw meat is heated in an oven – a member of the family of S dies (Khmelnytskyi region) (Ivannikova 2005: 195)
– pieces of meat are baked – people die during a fire (Vinnytsia region) (Prisiazhniuk 2005: 182)
– raw meat is taken away by a horse – a relative of S dies (Northwest Russia) (Razumova 2001: 95)

F.1.1.5. Heavenly body

F.1.1.5.1. a heavenly body hides (is down, dims) – a relative of S dies
– the moon is down – the husband of S dies (Zhytomyr region) (Shevchuk & Stavitska 2017: 180)
– the sun is down – a relative of S dies (Tver region) (Lurye & Chereshnya 2000: № 27, 28, 53)

F.1.2. an object is created by S or appears in the home territory of S – a child of S is born / family members of S remain alive
F.1.2.1. Tree
F.1.2.1.1. a tree appears in the garden of S (or is planted by S) – a child is born / family members remain alive
– S plants a tree – S is pregnant (Northwest Russia) (Razumova 2002: 298)
– a large tree appears in the garden of S – family members of S stay alive during the cholera epidemic (Khmelnytskyi region) (Shevchuk & Stavitska 2017: 139)

F.2. an object as a symbol of the collective (family) or the household of a dreamer

F.2.1. a part separates from the object that belong to S (or R) – a relative of S (or R) is 'separated' from the family (dies, leaves the family) / S suffers a loss
F.2.1.1. a part of the house of S (or R) collapses – a resident of the house of S (or R) dies (leaves the family)

    – a wall (a corner, the roof/ceiling) in the house of S/R collapses – a member of the family of S/R dies (Zhytomyr, Poltava region) (Shevchuk & Stavitska 2017: 88; Lazareva 2018: 81–88)
    – a wall in the barn of S collapses – the husband of S dies (Vinnytsia region) (Prisiazhniuk 2005: 177)
    – a part of the roof collapses – the wife of S dies (Pinsk region) (Tolstaia 2002: 202)
    – a beam falls off the ceiling in the house of S – the husband of S dies (Northwest Russia) (Razumova 2001: 99)
    – clay falls off the wall of the house of S – the niece of S dies (Ulyanovsk region) (Safronov 2016: 487)
    – a part of the building that S enters breaks away – a relative of S dies (Northwest Russia) (Razumova 2001: 98)
    – the roof of the house of S collapses – the son of S is imprisoned (Tver region) (Lurye & Chereshnya 2000: № 25)
    – the stove in the house of S is destroyed – S divorces her husband (Rostov region) (Zhivitsa 2004: 84–85; Lazareva 2018: 93)

F.2.1.2. a part of the stove (or an object standing in the oven) in the house of S/R is destroyed – an inhabitant of the house of S/R dies

    – elements of the stove in the house of R are destroyed – several members of the family of R die (Poltava region) (Lazareva 2018: 92)
    – pots in the stove in the house of S are destroyed – members of the family of S die (Zhytomyr region) (Shevchuk & Stavitska 2017: 123)

F.2.1.3. a part of the tree (in the garden of S/R) is separated – R (a relative of S) dies

    – an apple is plucked from the tree that grows in the garden of S – the daughter of S dies (Zhytomyr region) (Shevchuk & Stavitska 2017: 130–131)
    – two apples in the tree in the garden of R are ripe and ready to fall – R and his wife die (Poltava region) (Lazareva 2018: 96)

F.2.1.4. a piece of the clothing of S falls off – a relative of S dies (S suffers a loss)
– the sole falls off the shoe of S – the child of S dies (Zhytomyr region) (Shevchuk & Stavitska 2017: 121)
– the sole falls off the boot of S – a pig from the household of S dies (Zhytomyr region) (Shevchuk & Stavitska 2017: 81)
– a part falls off the wristwatch of S – the mother of S dies (Ulyanovsk region) (Trushkina 2002: 145–146)

F.2.1.5. a part of the body of S / R is separating (missing) – S / R loses a friend or relative (suffers a loss)
– a tooth (several or all teeth) of S falls out – a friend or a relative of S dies (Tver, Volynsk, Ulyanovsk, Khmelnitsky, Zhitomir, Lviv, Poltava regions, Northwest Russia) (Lurye & Chereshnya 2000: № 10; Razumova 2002: 300; Gura 2002: 76; Trushkina 2002: 146; Ivannikova 2005: 195; Safronov 2016: 491–492; Shevchuk & Stavitska 2017: 65, 81, 92, 121, 130; Stavitska 2018: 254; Lazareva 2018: 146–148)
– a tooth of S falls out – a relative of S is taken to the soldiers (Zhytomyr region) (Shevchuk & Stavitska 2017: 112)
– a tooth of S falls out – S loses her money (somebody has stolen it) (Zhytomyr region) (Shevchuk & Stavitska 2017: 104)
– the leg of S falls off – the father of S dies (Ulyanovsk region) (Safronov 2016: 490–491)
– the lower halves of the bodies of S and R are missing – S divorces her husband, the husband of R dies (Northwest Russia) (Razumova 2003: 391)
– the eye of R is missing – the grandmother of S dies (Northwest Russia) (Razumova 2001: 90)

F.2.1.6. an object lacks its part – a relative of S dies
– a mirror is without a corner – a relative of S dies (Volgograd region) (Zhivitsa 2004: 62–63)
– a fish is missing its head – the son of S drowns (Zhytomyr region) (Shevchuk & Stavitska 2017: 185)

F.2.2. N cuts something off (cuts an object into pieces, destroys a part of the object) – a relative of S dies (or S breaks up with someone or suffers a loss in the household)
F.2.2.1. N cuts something off – a relative of S dies or leaves S
– N is going to cut off the finger of S – the mother of S dies (Ulyanovsk region) (Trushkina 2002: 147–148)

– S cuts off her daughter's hand – the daughter of S leaves the parental home (she gets married) (Poltava region) (Lazareva 2018: 160)

– S cuts wood – the brother of S dies (Tver region) (Lurye & Chereshnya 2000: № 3)

– S mows rye – a relative of S dies (Poltava region) (Lazareva 2018: 112)

F.2.2.2. S cuts something off – S suffers a loss in the household

– S cuts her hair – S suffers a loss in the household (a duck has killed her ducklings) (Kharkiv region) (Krasikov 2005: 228)

– S mows rye – S suffers a loss in the household (her pig kills the piglet) (Zhytomyr) (Shevchuk & Stavitska 2017: 166)

– S cuts a slice of bread for U – S suffers a loss in the household (a calf dies) (Ulyanovsk region) (Safronov 2016: 421)

F.2.3. an object grows (or restores its integrity) – the family of S grows (or family members reunite)

F.2.3.1. an object grows – the family of S grows

– a tooth grows in the mouth of S – a relative of S is born (Northwest Russia) (Razumova 2002: 300)

F.2.3.2. an object restores integrity – S reunites with loved ones

– S inserts the lost tooth in her mouth – the husband of S returns from the war alive (Ulyanovsk region) (Safronov 2016: 489)

F.2.3.3. S receives a part of the object – S reunites with loved ones / a new member is included in the family

– S receives a piece of the loaf – the mother of S returns home (Northwest Russia) (Razumova 2001: 96)

– S receives the braid belonging to R – child of R is adopted by the family of S (Ulyanovsk region) (Safronov 2016: 478)

As we see from section F.1., objects in dreams can symbolize a person (usually their owner). Negative metamorphoses of objects are interpreted as predictions of misfortune (in most cases, someone's death or illness). The most frequently mentioned objects in those narratives are houses, stoves, trees, clothes, pieces of raw meat, heavenly bodies. Here are some examples of the dream narratives described in this section (the texts below were translated from Russian and Ukrainian).

*I had a dream about my neighbors. At that time, the grandfather, the grandmother, and the daughter were all still alive. In my dream, **their house was askew and then collapsed** ... After that, **the grandfather** [who lived in that house] **became ill and died** (Poltava region).* (Lazareva 2018: 67–68)

*A neighbor of the Guks often saw Guk's mother-in-law, Sofia Yurievna. She used to cry and feel sorry for her daughter, who had married Guk. And then she had a dream **that the stove in the Guk's house collapsed**. In two weeks, **Guk** went to Kyiv and **suddenly died there**. It was on May 10, 1925 (Zhytomyr region).* (Shevchuk & Stavitska 2017: 120)

*When my brother was at war, my father wrote a letter that he had a dream that all the apple trees in our garden were black, and **his favorite apple tree was cut down**. After that, we received a message that **my brother had been killed in the war** (Novgorod region).* (Lurye & Chereshnya 2000: № 22)

***Before my father died**, my mother had a dream that she was washing clothes and his handkerchief in the river. This **handkerchief floated away and drowned in water**. My mother failed to fish it out (Poltava region).* (Lazareva 2018: 78)

*When my daughter finished basic school, we went to Andreapol with her to buy her a prom dress ... And then I had a dream that somebody brought me a dress, supposedly **her dress** ... I took this dress – **it was rotten** ... Well, **she got married at 17, quit studying, and everything went bad** (Tver region).* (Lurye & Chereshnya 2000: № 38)

Motifs included in sections F.2.1. and F.2.2. can be described by the scheme: *a part separates (or is separated by someone) from the object – a relative is 'separated' from the family*. In some cases, such plots are also regarded as predictions of losses in the dreamer's household. Below, you can see some narratives mentioned in these sections of the motif index.

***Before my mother died** (she was then in hospital with a heart attack), I had seen in a dream that **the wall in our house had collapsed**. When I woke up and began preparing to visit her at the hospital, I was called and said that she was dead (Poltava region).* (Lazareva 2018: 82)

*On the eve of Good Friday, I had a dream that an apple hung on the apple tree in our garden. I climbed onto that apple tree **to pick this apple** ... In*

*the same year ... **my** [daughter] **Olya died** (Zhytomyr region)*. (Shevchuk & Stavitska 2017: 130–131)

***Before my brother died**, I had a dream that **my tooth had fallen out**. I will remember this dream for the rest of my life. A healthy tooth had fallen out. I cried so much [in the dream] that I woke up and could not calm down (Arkhangelsk region)*. (Lazareva 2018: 147)

*We lived in the Far East with my mom and dad ... **My dad was killed**, a driver killed him. And before that, I had a dream that **my leg (below the knee) separated from the body**. I tried to attach it again. But after I took a step, the leg fell off again (Ulyanovsk region)*. (Safronov 2016: 490–491)

Objects and their parts in such dreams are various:

Table 1. Objects and their parts in the dream narratives from sections F.2.1. and F.2.2. of the motif index.

Divided object	Part of the object
house	wall, corner, roof (ceiling), stove
stove	element of the stove, pot standing in the stove
dreamer's body	tooth, hair, finger, arm, leg
dreamer's clothing	sole of the shoe, detail of the wristwatch
tree	fruit, tree branch

The interpretations given to such dream plots are also various:
- death of a family member;
- parting with loved ones (divorce, leaving for the army, the departure of the daughter to her husband);
- loss in the dreamer's household.

But every interpretation fits into the general narrative structure described above: losing a part of the object in the dream 'predicts' losing something in real life.

The scheme from section F.2.3. (an object grows or restores its integrity – the dreamer's family grows / family members reunite) is an inversion of the previous narrative structure. For example, losing a tooth in the dream is regarded as a prediction of death. But in some dream plots, a tooth grows in the dreamer's

mouth, or the dreamer inserts the lost tooth back into the mouth. Such dreams, on the contrary, are associated with the birth of a child or family reunification:

> Before **my cousin was born**, *my mother had a dream that* **a tooth had grown in her mouth**. (Razumova 2002: 300)

> *I had a dream that* **my tooth fell out**, *and I kept it. "Why are you holding it? Throw it away! Insert the gold!" someone said to me. "No, I need my own," I answered. And* **I inserted it back**. *I was told that* **my husband would come back from war, I would stay with him**. *And so it happened.* (Safronov 2016: 489)

Although all these plots could seem quite different at first glance (various images are mentioned, various things happen with them in a dream, various life events are regarded as predicted by such dreams), we can find the same logic, the same metaphors, the same narrative structures in the core of them.

Some of these plots may seem unique (for example, a dream about growing a new tooth or obtaining someone's part of the body). But the logic of interpretation of such plots is pretty traditional and repeats in many prophetic dream narratives. For example, an object symbolizes the dreamer's family and its part – a family member.

CONCLUSIONS

The motif index shows us that plots of prophetic dreams are not as individual and diverse as it seems. I reduced a substantial corpus of prophetic dream narratives (published by ethnographers and folklorists in Eastern Slavic regions over the last century) to the 171 narrative schemes described in the motif index. These invariants illustrate the traditional logic of dream interpretation. It cannot be explained by describing the meaning of a symbol without its context. The structure of the whole narrative should be taken into consideration to understand this logic.

We can regard the symbolism of prophetic dreams as a language presenting the folk tradition of the dream interpretation as a semiotic system. Dream images (such as a house, a tree, an apple) are words of this language. Narrative structures of prophetic dream plots and their semantics are the grammar of this language. Revealing these structures, we begin to understand this language and gain the ability to "speak" it. For example, I described the scheme "a part separates from the object – a dreamer's relative is 'separated' from the family".

We can construct our own prophetic dream narrative, which will fit into this scheme, by substituting "the object" and "its part" (from the general description "a part separates from the object") for any images. The generalized interpretation ("…a relative is 'separated' from the family") is supposed to be replaced with various specific life cases (someone's death, divorce, breaking up, etc.). Therefore, we can construct an infinite number of stories of prophetic dreams, indistinguishable from authentic texts. Invariants presented in the index help us understand how people generate their stories about prophetic dreams (in other words, how they interpret dreams because interpretation determines the form of the narrative).

All these schemes are interconnected. They represent common metaphors, such as "an object is a symbol of a collective" or "an object symbolizes its owner". In other words, we can talk about the traditional system of dream interpretation. It allows regarding prophetic dream narratives as a specific group of folklore texts corresponding with this system, developing the typology of prophetic dream motifs and, finally, the motif index of prophetic dream narratives.

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NOTES

[1] The research was prepared within the framework of the project "Creation of a Type and Motif Index of the Folk Tales about Dreams (East Slavonic Material of the Twentieth and Twenty-First Centuries)", which was implemented at the Russian State University for the Humanities in 2020. The motif index of prophetic dream narratives was published in my book (Lazareva 2020a: 187–231). The main principles for compiling the motif index were presented in several articles (Lazareva 2020b; Lazareva 2021). The current article summarizes everything written on this topic, reworks it, supplements with significant additions, comments, and examples which were not made in the previous works, and translates this research into English to make it more visible.

[2] Among the genres are novellas, narrative songs, medieval ballads, romances, myths, etiological legends, legends about heroes, Christian legends, lives of saints, stories about the devil, jokes, epics, conspiracies, riddles, proverbs.

[3] A detailed review of these works is presented in the first chapter of my PhD thesis devoted to the study of the symbolism of dreams in Eastern Slavic culture (Lazareva 2018: 16–60).

[4] As an exception, we can mention deceased people and saints in dreams, which, as was shown in the research of E. Safronov, have a stable set of roles (Safronov 2016). The author managed to divide such plots into subgroups depending on the character's actions (ibid.) because the plot structure of this group of dream narratives (designated by Safronov as "dreams about another world") is similar to the structure of demonic legends.

[5] The term "culture pattern dreams" was introduced by J. S. Lincoln, who researched dream narratives among native American tribes (Lincoln 2003: 22). He wrote that "the culture pattern dream of each tribe conforms to a definite stereotyped pattern laid down by the culture" (ibid.: 23).

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