

*baijan filolokiyasy meseleri*. Baku, 1983.

<sup>11</sup>Voroshil, G. Azərbaycan dilinin teshekkul tarihine dair gejdler. In: *Azerbajjan filolokiya meseleri*. Baku, 1, 1983, p 43.

<sup>12</sup>Chay, M. *Anadoluda turk dang'asö*. Istanbul, 1967.

<sup>13</sup>Seyidinov, M. *Gyzyl deyushchunun taleyi*. Baku, Kenchlik, 1984.

<sup>14</sup>Burtsev, I. Alarvady: bu efsanedir, ja hegigy. In: *Tahychly gazet*. 12. 09. 1972.

<sup>15</sup>Kravtsov, N. *Slavyansky folklor*. Moscow, 1976, p. 64.

<sup>16</sup>See, Note 4, pp. 72-73.

<sup>17</sup>Firshtein, L. O nekotorykh obychayakh i poveriyakh, svyazannykh s rozhdeniem i vospitaniem rebyonka u uezbekov Yuzhnogo Horezma. In: *Semya i semeinye obryady u narodov Srednei Azii i Kazakhstana*. Moscow, 1978, p. 193.

<sup>18</sup>*Azerbajjan folkloru antologijasy*. Baku, 1968, 1 kitab, p. 11.

<sup>19</sup>Azerbajjan klassik edebijjati kitabhanasy 20 chillde. In: *Halg edebijjaty*. Baku, 1982, 1, p. 9.

<sup>20</sup>From the collection of the author.

## **DEADSEERS (SOULSEERS) IN THE HUNGARIAN VILLAGE TODAY**

Gábor Barna. Budapest, Hungary

In my lecture given at the 7th Finno-Ugric Congress in Debrecen ('The Hungarian Soulseer *halottlátó* and The Historic Roots of Soulseeing') I tried to give an outline of the historical origin and the constituents of dead seeing and dead seers. This time I am concentrating on the living belief, the dead seeing (soulseeing) and dead seers (soulseers) of the recent past and of today. I have tried to find the mental needs producing and preserving the belief in dead seeing, to reveal the psychic needs making people see dead seers, and finally, to examine the role played by dead seers in the communities they belong to, primarily in Hungarian rural society.

Dead seeing and dead seers are not completely parts of the historical past, since the best known and most famous dead seers were living at the turn of the century and later, and there are a few living even today. A film was also made in the 1980s (directed by Domokos Moldován) about Jolán Vécsey, the most famous living dead seer, who lives in Putnok, a small town in the North of Hungary. (Unfortunately, although the film recorded several interesting details,

it was designed to criticise rather than to understand this phenomenon. Its purpose was not to understand the motives of the dead seer and her clients but to deny and denounce dead seeing. Social and scientific debates that took place after the film had been shown were also based on the same approach.)

In popular beliefs of the recent past and present, the figure of the dead seer and the idea of dead seeing are closely connected with death, the cult of the dead and the belief in souls. The most important function of the dead seer is to get in touch with the soul of the dead and to mediate between the souls of the living and the dead.

To briefly summarise the oral tradition concerning dead seers, we can draw the following conclusions. According to popular beliefs, the dead seers' talent comes from the God, it is something that one cannot learn, it is just received passively. These people are chosen for this function and for this particular talent before birth. Dead seers (men or women) get this knowledge when falling into trance and being asleep for a longer or shorter time. Meanwhile their souls go over to the other world – the Heaven, the Purgatory and the Hell. It is only then that they can perform their mediatory function. They speak only to those who believe in them – they can recognise non-believers and send them away. They do not ask for any fee, but accept donations. They are considered deeply religious persons. They have always lived, and are still living, especially in the Catholic regions of the country – in Northern-Hungary where the Paloc people (a traditional ethnographic group) and in Moldavia, the easternmost region in Romania where Hungarian Catholics live. Many dead seers are also considered to have a talent for healing people and prophesying. The dimensions of the area where they were – and are – known were and may be quite different; they often have visitors from hundreds of kilometres off. On the other hand, in their own small communities they are very often less appreciated than elsewhere. This is obviously the 'prophet effect' when the members of a community can hardly tolerate that one of them stands out from among the others and rises above the average.

The direct reason for visiting the dead seer is usually the appearance and haunting of a soul of the dead, or some odd incident associated with it. The purpose of the visit in such cases is to learn and do away with the reason why the soul is haunting. (In a few places a special setting off ceremony has also developed: they first go to the cemetery and call the dead person or his or her soul to go with them.)

In the past century there were two different, though interacting ways of keeping in touch with the soul of the dead person – 1) through the dead seers mentioned above and 2) through different spiritualist seances, especially in the middle of the past century. Obviously, there is no sharp dividing line between

the two ways. We can speak of a constant interaction.

A sort of interaction was quite natural – the spiritualist phenomenon has become well-known through the migration to America and back, as well as through the press, and it spread widely both in villages and towns during the wars (the Crimean War in 1856, the two World Wars). After the wars spiritualism became less popular.

We can conclude that the belief in dead seeing and dead seers is based on a strong conviction that there is life after life. This strong belief was affected by particular intellectual trends (e.g. rationalism) in the 19th century and a kind of policy in the 20th century (strong anticlericalism of socialist regimes) but it did not perish, just weakened in a few social strata or social groups.

The reason for visiting dead seers lies in quite complex conflict situations produced by the death of someone within a community. The loss of a member of the community (family, relatives, larger community) always brings about pain and a feeling of emptiness, which is quite natural and understandable, or on the contrary, relief (in the case of a long suffering, a painful disease or when a deviant person dies). After the death of someone the interpersonal relations within the community must be rearranged, which again may produce conflicts (especially when orphans, widow(er)s or an inheritance is concerned, or when the person was killed or died a violent death. And at last there may be an open question concerning the relations of the dead person and the survivors with special regard to the circumstances of mourning. Have they done everything expected from them according to the traditions and the general norm? In most of the cases this is the only motive of visiting dead seers. They answer these questions, and taking their advice and following their instructions, their visitors also take an active part in settling the conflict. In fact, it is them who are responsible for its success by having masses celebrated for the dead, praying for them and taking care of their tombs – the most common wishes of the dead persons.

The people calling on dead seers usually inquire about the life of the soul after death; they ask questions inquiring if the deceased is satisfied with the circumstances of the funeral and the mourning, if he or she has any wishes and why his or her soul cannot rest in peace.

The messages mediated by dead seers eventually speak of the degree to which the generally accepted and obligatory norms of the cult of the dead in a particular community are observed; they give answers to the questions whether they were completely complied with or not, whether any of them was violated or forgotten. In several regions a visit is in itself an important part of the cult of the dead, a compulsory final ceremony of mourning.

This is supported by several stories according to which dead seers speak

only to those who believe in them. That is to say, they can accept only the people who live according to the same cultural norms, behave and think the same way as themselves, and have nearly the same scale of values. However, it is just the famous dead seer of Putney who is said not to have used her rosary and pray aloud in the presence of communists and atheists.

Should the system consisting of the dead seer, the community, the traditional norms, and as a part of the latter the cult of the dead break at any point, dead seeing as such would come to an end. It could happen certainly if the dead seers die, since their powers cannot be inherited. Social changes, migration or any other reason quite naturally also affect the traditional norms, scale of values and even the beliefs of communities.

According to the stories about this belief, dead seers are typically deeply religious people. The reason for it is obviously to justify people visiting them, in spite of its being forbidden by the church. Although this prohibition has always been quite strict, the church itself has also contributed to the preservation of these beliefs by encouraging the worshippers to have a mass celebrated for the rest and salvation of the souls of the dead, to pray and light candles for them, or go on a pilgrimage to one of the shrines. All this is based on the religious dogma that the living are entitled to make atonement for the salvation of the dead. The piety of dead seers served not only to justify the people visiting them – that is to say, to be a sort of self justification; they were also allowed to play an important part in the life of the community as organisers and leaders of religious groups and ceremonies, often even as authors of prayers, composers of psalms or as presenters.

People talk about their visits to dead seers only using the general patterns of particular oral genres (fabulat, memorat, etc.), thus transferring their personal experience to a different level. This way several elements and the outlines of oral tradition are strengthened and handed down, eliminating the special, particular features. Thus individual experience has become a collective tradition.

Dead seers can rightly be considered doctors of the soul, on the basis of their activity and power to settle conflicts. That is why it is quite understandable that in many places they were – and are – believed to have special powers for curing and prophesying as well. Many of them were curing, but this was just psychological therapy.

The belief in dead seeing and dead seers is likely to be preserved at least for a while due to the existence of the people who believe, and will believe, in ghosts, in soul and in the other world, and to the fact that cultural conflicts will always occur, and some mechanism will always be needed to help settle them.

## Selected literature

<sup>1</sup>Bálint, S. *Egy magyar szentember. Orosz István önéletraja.* (A Hungarian holy man. Autobiography of István Oroszi.) Budapest, 1941.

<sup>2</sup>Barna G. Halottlátók Borsodban. (Dead seers in county Borsod.) In: *A miskolci Herman Ottó Múzeum Közleményei* 12. Miskolc, 1973, pp. 109-113.

<sup>3</sup>Barna, G. *Néphit és népszokások a Hortobágy vidékén.* (Folk belief and folk custom in the Hortobágy'i region.) Budapest, 1979.

<sup>4</sup>Barna, G. Totenseher im ungarischen Volksglauben. In: *Műveltség és Hagomány* XX. Debrecen, 1981, pp. 177-189.

<sup>5</sup>Barna, G. Mészáros Mihály, a csépai halottlátó. (Mihály Mészáros, the soulseer, dead seer in Csépa.) In: *Csépa, tanulmányok egy alföldi palóc kirajzás népéletéből.* Ed. Gábor Barna. Eger-Szolnok, 1982, pp. 335-362.

<sup>6</sup>Czövek, J. *Halottlátók a magyar néphagyományban.* (Deadseers in the Hungarian folk tradition.) Debrecen, 1987.

<sup>7</sup>Pócs, É. A falu hiedelemvilágának összetevői. (Components of the belief-system of the village Nogradsipeki.) In: *Nógrádsipek. Tanulmányok egy észak magyarországi falu mai folklórjáról.* Ed. A. Szemerkenyi. Budapest, 1980, pp. 269-358.

## **MUSIC IN THE SYSTEM OF TRADITIONAL BELIEFS OF THE SOUTH UDMURTS**

Elena Boikova. Perm, Russia

Udmurts belong to those few nations of Europe whose life style has preserved some of the ancient tribal division features. The experts number now up to 70 Udmurt kins that have mixed with each other during the historic process. The traces of tribal system are found in the peculiarities of peoples settling in a place (the formation of 'secondary kin nests' or *vy/s* - using the Udmurt dialectologist M. Atamanov's terminology) as well as preserving ancient heathen rites. (The Udmurts were converted to Christianity at a comparatively recent time going back from two to three hundred years and there are still some pagan villages south of Udmurt district).

This paper is devoted to the singing tradition of Omga-vyl, one of the territory-kin formations (people of Omga kin extraction), situated South-East of the Alnash district of the Udmurt territory. It includes four villages such as Kuzebaev, Muvazhie (traditionally called Usso), Chorny Klyuch (Shyod