

3. The last stage of the agrarian calendar, autumn and winter, was aimed at expressing gratitude for the present harvest and praying for the future one.

Autumn prayer took place at a meadow, where lads sacrificed a ram. On returning home they prayed more and more, bowing to their god.

The general name of this autumn holiday is *Shizhyl yon*. In different traditions even in far away villages it could be timed to different dates of Christian calendar, mostly to *Pukrol* which was celebrated on the 14th of October. The people of Chumaly village celebrated St. Nicholas' Day on the 19th of December.

On that autumn holiday there was also a prayer in the big Kuala. The animal to be sacrificed was a foal. All people brought their cooking for blessing. Young wives were to bring ducks to Kuala and to leave there their turbans. After the prayer people paid visits to their male relatives to have the *vösh nerge* rite. But they did not sing their special prayer *vösh nerge* tune at that autumn holiday (there is no mention about it).

Winter holiday, the last in the calendar cycle was *Vöy* ('Shrovetide'). On that holiday there was the last prayer of the year in the Big Kuala. Both men and women came there and ate sacrificed ducks. They brought a loaf of bread, cut it in pieces and gave a piece to everybody. After that they paid visits to their male relatives and they sang their traditional *vösh nerge* tune (the same as for *Byjym nunal* and *Petrol*). That rite lasted for the whole Shrovetide week.

Summing up the above-mentioned information, it should be noted that the tradition of calendar rites and their musical expression taking place in Omgavyl villages is rather typical for the South Udmurts and, at the same time, it is more elaborate in comparison with their neighbours as a result of its better preservation.

## **TYPES OF MORDVINIAN INSTRUMENTAL FOLK MUSIC**

### **Instrumental Tunes of Symbolic-Programme Character**

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To Mordvinian traditional music of this kind belong the tunes that used to be intoned at public prayers ('*ozks*') devoted to animistic cults of trees and water. As distinct from programme tunes with descriptive and onomatopoeic

elements, the former tunes are not so directly connected with the reflected phenomenon. Their programme manifests itself in harmony as a conventional intonation, the role of which is close to that of an ideogram which is informative only to a circle of the initiated and is practically incomprehensible to the others. Such tunes are defined by I. Matsiyevsky as a special type of instrumental music – *tunes with a programme idea*.

Thus, while the programme-descriptive and onomatopoeic instrumental tunes have what might be called a *plot*, understood by everybody because these tunes, by means of art, speak about the surrounding world, and their semantics evokes the same or almost the same associations among both the initiated and the non-initiated, the symbolic-programme tunes are encoded into a sign system. This makes it practically impossible to understand their programme without a special knowledge of their harmonic and pitch peculiarities. According to A. Schaft, ‘on the basis of a convention, sounds and their combinations can also play the role of symbolic images, mostly in combination with a certain emotional key, which is understood only in a definite cultural environment (...). The scale of symbols is extraordinarily wide, their possibilities are limitless.’

Musical ideograms as well as ideograms of other arts (e.g. of embroidery, ritual dances, pantomime etc.) served as a link between different generations of people. Thus, the symbolic-programme instrumental tunes have encoded in their conventional language musical images and ideas that cannot be related by descriptive programme tunes, in which ‘musicality’ of nature is still felt. In this respect symbolic programme tunes are akin to such ancient forms of communication as pictography, which was preserved among the Mordvinians until the end of the last century. This assumption is confirmed by our observations of remnants of a sign system preserved in traditional Mordvinian dances, accompanied by the tunes under discussion.

The most characteristic feature of the rhythm of such dances and instrumental tunes is a specially developed feeling of a non-cyclic successively unfolding *ostinato*-like movement. This rhythm, not structured regularly by choreographic or melodic-intonational means, is connected with special, plastic body movements giving the impression of suppressed emotions, of outwardly unnoticeable great energy being gradually let out. All the ‘emotional work’ in such dances, as distinct from zoomorphic ones is, in its essence, invisible. Their contemplation is directed at this inner work, which must have been retained from the ancient *Weltanschauung*, comprehensible in its plastic form in the traditional cultural environment of the distant past.

In the absence of a developed written language, such art in its specific forms expressed fundamental ideas and notions of the society. That is why the deciphering of the symbolism of Mordvinian choreography is necessary for under-

standing a whole complex of problems related to music, including instrumental music. It should be noted that these forms of creative reflection of the surrounding world of sounds have their own level of abstraction and typification of that world.

In the existing forms of instrumental music descriptive programme and symbolic programme tunes are not always distinguishable. Many centuries of their parallel development have brought into existence mixed forms. In each particular case the tune has retained what can be better understood under specific conditions. These tendencies acquired dynamism on the general background of the loss of ancient social functions of these tunes, of the disintegration of ritual systems, especially in the last century or two.

### **Instrumental Tunes Connected With the Cult of Trees**

They were traditionally intoned at public calendar prayers during spring and summer: *ine shi* ('Great Day'), that coincided with Easter after Christianization of Mordvinians; *baban' ozks* or *vel' ozks* ('village prayer') that coincided with St. Peter's Day – June 29; *Keremet'*, celebrated on August 18 – the day of Flor and Lavr according to the Christian calendar. All the calendar prayers were held in a sacred grove, *Keremet'*, usually under an oak, a lime-tree, a birch, an elm, a pine.

In the above-mentioned prayers the main ritual functions were obligatory, performed, as a rule, by elected persons: the leader of the prayer – *ozksatya* (*ozks* – 'to pray, to worship'; *atya* – 'old man'), or *ozksbaba* (*baba* – 'old woman'), who served as an intermediary between the Patron and the people, and was his mouthpiece, heard his 'voice'; a beautiful girl (probably personifying the female source of the kin); a sturdy, handsome youth (personifying the male source of the kin), and musicians playing bagpipes and *nyudis*, as well as performers of protective signals on *torama* – natural trumpet or horn.

Folklorists believe that at community prayers 'music and singing were the most active components' of these dramatised rites (Brizhinsky). The best musicians – pipers, *nyudi*-players, violinists, and the best dancers were invited to *ozkses*.

Besides, it should be noted that at these *ozkses* not just song-texts, their choral sounding, tunes, but also timbres of musical instruments (*puvama*, *nyudi*) and the instruments proper had ritual meaning. For instance, for performing ritual tunes at *ozkses* special ritual bagpipes (*ozks puvama*) existed that differed from other types of bagpipes by their archaic design, and, in some places, the air-bags of such bagpipes were made of bladders of sacrificial animals (there were usually bulls bought for communal money) and their horns that served as resonators for the pipes of bagpipes or *nyudis*. Often, side by side

with *ozksatya* and *ozksbaba*, the musicians served as mediums, i.e. intermediaries between the community and its mythological Patrons. The community was to do everything for the voice of the medium (in case of a musician – the voice of his instrument) to reach the Patron. The musicians were placed on a fold-gate and lifted while playing; thus the distance between the community and its Patron was shortened. (At similar *ozkses* a Mari musician climbed a tree and played for the Patron on his ritual *gusli*). To communicate with Patrons ritual bagpipes were necessary, or at least a part of this instrument - *nyudi*; any other instruments, for example, those used for exorcising evil spirits (*toramas*, rattles) could not be used.

V. S. Brizhinsky believes that there was also a practical reason for lifting the playing pipers. 'The custom', he writes, 'had two reasons: first, it was an acknowledgement of the exceptionally honoured status of the musicians, and second, a lifted position is more convenient for directing the choir.' The second reason, even if it existed, must have appeared in later times, after *ozkses* had considerably changed and acquired, partially, aesthetic functions of traditional folk theatre. Out of the symbolic programme tunes of the *ozkses* connected with cults of trees, only those devoted to the birch ('*Kelu*') and the lime-tree ('*Peshenya*') have come down to us. Images of these sacred trees (side by side with oak and pine) are widely used in traditional lyrical songs that were intoned in the past of the *ozkses*. This refers to common mythological roots. These songs reflect most ancient concepts of the Universe. For instance, the image of the sacred birch – traditionally worshipped by Mordvinians in the past – is related to the idea of The World Tree, much evident in the poetry of many Finno-Ugric and other peoples.

In Mordvinian mythology the World Tree is a symbol of the interrelation of the three worlds: its roots are in the underground world, which in folk tradition is the world of the dead, of the ancestors; its crown is in the world of mythological Patrons, its trunk is in this world and connects the worlds of patrons and ancestors. The birch is seen as a great old tree. Heavenly bodies go round it; under it a healing spring wells up and its water returns health and strength to people and eyesight to the blind. According to traditional Mordvinian beliefs trees themselves have healing qualities.

In Mordvinian folklore the beliefs in sacred trees are sometimes related to beliefs in the Great Bird and beliefs in the nativity of the three great female Patrons. A legend written down from Erzia migrants to Buguruslan region says:

*There is an unusual, sacred birch in the middle of the Earth; the Great Bird, a messenger of the Supreme Patron built its nest in the crown; it laid three eggs: out of the first one it hatched the Patroness of harvest and fertility – Norovava, out of the others – the Patron-*

*esses of the wind – Varmava and of the woods – Virjava.*

It is interesting that in our days mythological songs about the birch are common in the very villages where programme tunes ‘Kelu’ (‘The birch’) have also been well preserved. The old-timers remember that both ‘Kelu’ songs and tunes were performed at community *ozkses* as late as in the 1920–30-ies.

As compared to the birch-tree songs, songs devoted to the lime-tree are considerably less common in Moksha and Erzia villages. But tunes of the same name – ‘Peshe’ (‘lime-tree’) and ‘Peshenya’ (‘little lime-tree’) are much more frequent than the songs, especially among Moksha musicians.

At public *ozkses*, poetic texts devoted to trees whose souls in the traditional environment were identified with the Patrons of crops and domestic animals (the lime-tree – devoted to bread, oak was the symbol of rain, birch-tree was the patron of horses) included traditional formulas-requests addressed to the souls of trees.

In accordance with musical-stylistic peculiarities and the manner of intoning, the programme-instrumental music connected with the cult of sacred trees is subdivided in two kinds:

1. Dancing tunes.
2. Melodious tunes close in character to the melodies of melodious mythological songs.

The second kind is closely related to the vocal-instrumental music, the subjects of which are linked with the same sphere of images – cultic praising of trees. According to the results of the polls carried out V. Brizhinsky, musicians accompanying these songs were ‘divided into two groups: pipers and hornblowers, pipers and violinists. Each of these groups accompanied the corresponding choral part’. As for the last remark, which can be interpreted as instrumental intoning of the vocal parts of a choir, it is completely justified. The author has noted similar samples, though not related to the *ozkses* under discussion. But there seems to be no evidence of any division of musicians at *ozkses* into groups, apart from the antiphonic play of two groups of pipers.

Moreover, considerable ethnographic material shows that the violin (‘*gar’ze, kayga*’) was introduced into *ozks* as a ritual instrument in a later period when this and other calendar rites started to acquire aesthetic functions, developing into a kind of dramatised entertainment. Finally, there is no evidence (modern recordings have not been taken into account) that the violin was used at *ozkses* in any melodious songs, especially together with an ensemble of dozens of singers, as the violin is not loud enough. Consequently, the information gathered by V. Brizhinsky refers to a relatively late-period music at the prayers.

The above-mentioned kinds of symbolic-programme music-rhythmically plastic dancing and melodious tunes (and melodious hymn-like songs, per-

formed to the accompaniment of musical instruments, which are close to the second kind) reflected one and the same object. They complemented each other, balanced the composition of *ozkses*, were their most important components.

At present only dancing tunes have been well preserved in a Mordvinian village. Melodious tunes are less common. As for the vocal-instrumental pieces which have retained their programme names, they are intoned without instrumental accompaniment.

All these kinds of ritual symbolic programme tunes are nowadays performed without any relation to any rituals and in new instrumental timbres – those of violins, harmonicas, balalaikas.

### **Instrumental Tunes Connected With the Cult of Water**

also refer to symbolic programme ritual dancing tunes, connected with animistic cults. Dancing tunes are known under the programme name – *Vedyava* (*Ved* – ‘water’, *ava* – ‘a woman’, ‘mother’. She is the mythological Patroness of water, marriage and childbearing. Her cult is more manifest in marriage and spring rites, in prosaic folklore. Her image is polysemantic, though.

At a marriage rite *Vedyava* was the embodiment of fertility, she was asked to grant a healthy and numerous posterity, she was given sacrifices (bread was thrown into the water, beer poured into the water), she was propitiated by a ritual dance to the accompaniment of bagpipes or *nyudi*, and in later periods violins. At spring girls’ rite, held during the floating of ice, she was begged to curb the liberated powers of nature amassed in winter. In folk tales, legends and narratives she is able to send evil charms; by her song she bewitches a young shepherd, leads him into the middle of an impassable swamp (where he perishes). According to tradition, *Vedyava* dwells in the water – rivers, lakes, springs, wells; long dark-green water plants are in some places called *Vedyavan’ chert’* – ‘Vedyava’s hair’, *Vedyavan’ nalt* – ‘Vedyava’s nets’. *Ozkses* devoted to this patroness were held by a natural water reservoir, more seldom by a well, those were also the places for performing the ceremonial songs and tunes.

Ethnographic literature describing both Moksha and Erzia of various areas of inhabitation refers mainly to marriage *ozkses* and dances devoted to *Vedyava*.

Ethnographers note ‘considerable licentiousness during dances’ as one of characteristic peculiarities of the *ozkses* devoted to water worshipping, ‘which indicates at the cult of a Mordvinian Aphrodite’ (B. Mainov). He mentions a number of ritual acts connected with *Vedyava* worshipping, which are definitely related to the cults of ‘all kinds of fertility’, to the world of the dead. The symbolism of ritual attributes is also connected with the cult of water: a cloth of linen symbolised the river, there was also a rite of impregnating a river or water with a great straw phallus, etc.

The tradition of accompanying the bride after her first night with playing a musical instrument is still alive in many Mordvinian villages, especially in the regions east of the Volga. But in most cases, during the visit of the bride to the water (nowadays this is usually a well, and this is explained by many informants as '*familiarising the bride with the place she will have to take water from*'), any dancing music is performed, including borrowed Russian music, to which the youth is to dance. If older people dance at this time (e.g. the match-maker), this is traditionally considered to be flippant or frivolous.

The stability of organising *ozkses* devoted to Vedyava after the first bridal night, which, together with rites and prayer-songs also include ritual dancing tunes, testifies to preservation of some elements of carpogenic magic (propitiating of the Patroness) side by side with evident elements of cathartic magic (cleansing after the first bridal night).

The *Vedyava* tunes have been preserved only in a limited number of samples, but old-timers still remember that at the above *ozkses* these tunes were played as late as before World War II. They are unable to relate any of their harmonic peculiarities, or any of the peculiarities of the dances accompanied by these tunes. They just remember that it was not the custom to perform these tunes at any other time. It is evident that as the *ozkses* devoted to *Vedyava* were becoming extinct, these tunes did not disappear altogether but, as other ritual rite dancing tunes, transformed over to non-ritual dancing music, changing in this transition their functions and their harmonies, the latter in accordance with the peculiarities of the new, borrowed instruments.

The songs devoted to *Vedyava* which used to be performed at the *ozkses* are also rare in modern everyday life. They have been well preserved only in Shoksha-Mordvinian villages of Ten'gushevo region of the Mordovia. It was the custom to perform them on the banks of the Moksha during ice-drift.

They were sung by girls who stood hand in hand, facing the water and swaying a little from side to side. These songs have been noted down by expeditions headed by the author. They are exceptionally melodious praises of *Vedyava*.

Fragments of poetic texts of this kind, although without melodies, were also noted down by the author among the Erzia migrants to the lands west of the Volga.