

THE RITUAL RELICS OF ONE OF THE HYPOSTASES OF THE COSMOGONICAL SACRIFICE With Special Reference To Armenian Dances

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A legend has been preserved among Armenians that bridges, arches, houses, fortresses, walls, etc., will be mighty and durable if someone – a young woman or man – is immured alive in them. In 1985, registering a new version of the dance *Sharec'in, mork'ur jan, sharec'in...* with dance, folklore texts and ethnographic information, we were convinced that the belief legend *Man as construction sacrifice* had deep roots among Armenians. The dance *Sharec'in, mork'ur jan, sharec'in...* was first published in 1958 by Srбуhi Lisitsian.¹ The new version states once more that the folklore text of *Sharec'in, mork'ur jan, sharec'in...* was sung as well as danced. The step is: two go, one back; the form: *canr gyond kotroc'i, chkutaxat* (slow dances with bending of knees and holding the small fingers). The metre of the music and steps is 4/4, the tempo is slow.

According to the legend, the constructor begins his work each morning, and in the evening the supernatural forces destroy the construction. A wise man appears in his dream and says that it is necessary to sacrifice his first-born girl or boy, sometimes even the mother nursing her first-born baby. In the morning, by certain circumstances, the daughter, the son, or the wife of the constructor is placed in the construction.² The victim sings, talking with the surrounding people, the mother or the aunt. The legend says that a conversation is set up between the victim and the sacrificer, the text of which is built up on the principle of ancient texts referring to the creation of the Universe. Its question-answer structure has a cumulative chain nature. The victim declares the state of affairs, and the other confirms the reality.

There is no rhythmic change in the dance, folklore, and musical pattern; the tragic line grows dynamically, and the performance ends with the punishment of the villain, i.e. the sacrificer. A logical development is felt in the psychology and the behaviour of the victim, growing into hatred. The tension is of psychological rather than practical character, expressed by the incantation or condemnation: *Turn into a black raven, sit on the wall and croak*; the guilt is unveiled, announced and assessed; the condemnation is immediately realised.

The cosmogonic quantitative principle is made relevant in the traditional text of the dance. The dialogue reveals the correspondence between the parts of the human body and the layers or storeys of the construction. There are seven divisions: ankle, knee, navel, waist, breast, neck, and forehead;³ they coincide

with the seven cosmogonic layers. Number 7 has the significance of entirety in Armenian mythological beliefs and dances. The semantic equivalence of number 7 in the text of the dance with the seven branches of the cosmogonic tree has been the main cause to have brought about the substitution of the human-sacrifice with the tree-sacrifice. The textual parts of the sacrifice ritual, especially the dialogue passages, interact with the riddle themes of the creation of the world and have the nature of a verbal duel. Verbal duels are known to have taken place between priests and creators, as a demarcating ritual between the old and the new. In this ritual the cosmos returns to its chaotic state, then is recreated, reconstructed, repeating all the transitional phases.⁴ Thus the verbal duel marks the creation of a new cosmos, a new man, a new society, a new construction.

During the process of building, the constructor acts as the priest-creator. In Armenian beliefs craftsmen and, especially, constructors have always been considered as possessors of knowledge and mysterious abilities. The better master of his work the craftsman was, the stronger his power was believed to be. Folklore and ethnographic materials show that these people have always struggled with or challenged cosmic forces: devils, evil spirits, demons of illness, etc. Thus, the human life, as a special entity, as the aim of the creation of cosmos, as its inner meaning and final phase, becomes the source of the construction. The vitality of the young body is transferred to the construction, and man becomes the origin of everything, just as the world came forth from human body in mythological times. From the original sacral material, *human-sacrifice*, a transformation occurs: the construction becomes the symbol of the sacrifice. Thus the first sacrifice is directly proportional to the structure of macrocosm and inversely proportional to the construction. It follows that the belief legend *Man as construction sacrifice* is related by its essence to deeper cultural categories of the order of the Universe.

Cosmos originally meant 'order, harmony'⁵ and referred to the state and military structure or women's adornments. Neither are the notions 'build', 'create', 'make' limited to the construction of a house, temple, town, or other structures: they refer also to state, governmental, religious, social institutions and even to ideological concepts.⁶ All this is based on the idea of setting limits, giving shape, putting in order, i.e. the idea of actively influencing the world, which is naturally peculiar to more universal processes than that of building. The central moment of construction rituals is the rite of setting the foundation.⁷ If we take each construction as a particular case of the public ritual and a separate part of a series of phenomena, it is understood as establishing the order, organising, and its crude coherence with mythological schemes is undeniable. The meaning of building a house, fortress, or city is connected with the concep-

tions of household, home, family, social life, i.e. the establishment of cosmos from chaos. This is proved by the stems *ti-te* in the words *tiezerk* - 'universe', *tikin* 'lady', *ter* 'lord', that have the original meanings of setting limits, giving shape, putting in order, i.e. ideas of actively influencing the world.⁸ From the semantic point of view, the belief legend *Man as construction sacrifice* is related also to the words *kamurj* 'bridge', *kamar* 'arch', and *zoh*, *zohal*, *zohray* (identical with the planets Venus and Saturn⁹); the etymology of these words takes the idea of the belief legend *Man as construction sacrifice* back to prehistoric times, to the cult of water, forests, fairies, etc. The human-sacrifice, at the same time, must have reconciled these spirits with men by his vitality and immortality, and then become a guardian spirit for that construction.

Acharean, in his *Armenian Etymological Dictionary*, comparing the word *kamurj* 'bridge' with the Greek γέφυρα 'heaven', considers it an original Armenian word formed from *kamar* 'arch'. The word *kamurj* of Indo-European origin is related to Latin *camurus* 'curved, arched', Sanskrit *kmárati* - 'become curved', German *Himmel* 'sky, heaven'.¹⁰ The words *kamar* and *kamurj* are also related to the meanings 'triumphal arc' and 'door',¹¹ being semantically identified with the triumphal march through the doors of Heaven to this world. In this respect, the construction of bridges or arches over rivers and roads simply signified the triumph over the invisible forces passing under them. Naturally, these forces would not have themselves mollified and roads marked the borderline between 'this' and 'that' world. So a sacrifice was required to become an intermediary and a guardian for that bridge or arch. The victims are first-born girls or nursing mothers, because being immured in a bridge or arch, they become a ritual means of fortifying the construction. The confinement of the alive victim into the walls of the construction is related to the fact that in nature all their actions are parallelly identified with human life, death and immortality.

According to Acharean, in Armenian *zoh* 'victim', *Zohal* 'planet Erewak', *Zohra* 'planet Arusyak/Lusentag' are derived from Arab *Zhl* 'go aside', 'go far'.¹² If we take this idea as a base, the planets must have a connection with the victim and the God who protected him. We assume that this God was double-faced (it was on the sky at night or in the morning), associated with whiteness, purity, brilliance, and with the virginity of the young victim, a patron of water spirits and sirens.

The dance text and the legend contain the idea of twins of the same and opposite sexes. On one side of the twins is the mother-aunt, on the other, the son-daughter. Through confrontation, one of the twins is destroyed to be modified and improved, the other undergoes metamorphosis to remain eternally connected with its twin. The ritual results in a new quality: a bridge, arch, fortress, etc. Thus the human-sacrifice in this case is not an ordinary murder; it is a thor-

oughly meaningful ritual act to guarantee the firmness and longevity of the construction, equivalent to the universal ideology of the creation of cosmos.

Literature

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⁴Op. cit., pp. 4, 36.

⁵Baiburin, A. K. *Zhilishche v obryadakh i predstavleniyakh vostochnykh slavyan*. Leningrad, 1983, p. 60; Acharean, H. *Hayeren armatakan bararan*. Yerevan. Vol. IV, 1979. (Later: HAB).

⁶See Note 5, Baiburin, p. 55.

⁷Zelenin, D. *Totemy-derevy v skazaniyakh i obryadakh evropeiskikh narodov*. Moscow-Leningrad, 1937, p. 47; Gamkrelidze, T., Ivanov, V. *Indoevropeiskii yazyk i indoevropeitsy*. Tbilisi, 1984. Vol. II, p. 640.

⁸Acharean, H. HAB. Vol. IV, *ti, te*.

⁹Acharean, H. HAB. Vol. II, *zoh*.

¹⁰Acharean H. HAB. Vol. II, *kamar*; see note 7, Gamkrelidze, Ivanov, pp. 742-743.

¹¹Frejdenberg, O. *Poetika syuzheta i zhanra*. Leningrad, 1963, pp. 209-210.

¹²Acharean, H. HAB. Vol. II, *zoh, zohray, zohral*.

FOLK BELIEFS IN THE UDMURT SYSTEM OF THE CALENDAR RITUALS

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The system of the Udmurt calendar rituals and holidays is alike to the similar systems of other Finno-Ugric peoples, first of all in the very principle of its organisation. But summarising all the dialectal variants, the classification of holidays according to the quantitative indication shows their differences in structure and in structural functions.