

a situation (and I agree with J. P. Sartre that consciousness is situative) when a black cat crosses the street or a horse starts to kick on their way to the temple?

I wish that on his way to the temple, a human being would be able to see from afar the brilliance of the cupolas illuminated by the Sun god. Neglect of the pagan faith that symbolises the unification of man and nature can hardly contribute to the formation of a person of good morals.

Thus, the active rebirth of the two rich layers of culture – the traditional and Christian ones – allows the nation to maintain its original and unique ethnic characteristics and to hold its rightful place in the spiritual heritage of the world. We can reach this goal only when we change the principles of social life and priorities in human values.

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FROM INCANTATIONS TO RITES

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Incantations, one of the oldest folklore genres, have changed during their centuries-old traditions. And yet they have maintained their niche among the modern phenomena. A wonder that they did not vanish together with folk tales, runo songs and other archaic folk tradition. The contemporary stock of magical incantations is characterised by a narrow circle of themes and techniques. The function, religious significance and background, in fact the whole traditional foundation of incantations has changed. Their meaning to an Estonian today cannot be compared with their effect a century ago. And yet, the recent years have seen a whole succession of public, even national performances of incantations. Apart from public incantations before multitudes of participants, verbal magic has also been used within closed social groups. It is quite a new practice at holidays or in a situation of crisis to appeal for help, using ancient traditional magic formulas or improvised incantations. In this paper I would like to deal with the distribution, ways and motivation of usage of magical incantations in Estonia today. Simultaneously, I have tried to give a sketch of the general changes in the people's attitudes to folk medicine, mediums and the casting of spells, as well as to explain the reasons and different ways of realisation of the incantations. I have used earlier reports about the casting of spells and magical incantations for comparison.

The Use of Incantations in Folk Medicine

In the past century it was only various craftsmen – smiths who pulled out teeth, coppers, fortune-tellers, palmists – who used to heal people without using some magical formulas. According to the bearers of tradition an act of curing without an accompanying magical incantation was not really effective. Even some craftsmen helpers applied some verbal magic, in order to improve the results of an act of curing. Archive records show that in the beginning of the 20th century quackery and the use of charms seem to have been widespread. This is corroborated by both the earlier records as well as by the reminiscences of the informants who were questioned in the 1970's and 80's. So, about 700 folk healers have practised in the parish of Võnnu within the past 100 years; they treated different human and animal diseases.¹ Mostly their healing rites were accompanied by incantations. The students of medicine who were looking for folk healers in the district of Pärnu in the 1930's found a great number of them.² In the archive records there are memorates about half of the healers of that period, showing that incantations were quite commonly used in their practice. One of such collecting expeditions has produced a copy of a note-book with about two and a half hundred incantations, which belonged to Anna Kuusik, a witch doctor who in those times practised in Pärnu and later moved to Häädemeeste. She lent it to a student for copying. In the 1960's the same note-book, with the explanatory remarks by Anna Kuusik, was copied for the funds of the Folklore Archives by Marta Mäesalu, the correspondent at Häädemeeste. So, the stock of incantations, later complements and shifts in the vocabulary, as well as the attitudes of the healer herself, are quite easy to observe and date.³

Folk Medicine and Official Medicine

The frequency of seeing folk healers and witch doctors evidently declined in the 1930's. In those times witch doctors could be found in large numbers in some places only, preferably in large marshy and swampy or woody areas, but also in some poor parishes. People had already developed a preference for licensed doctors. They preferred to go to a hospital to deliver a baby, snake-bites and erysipelas were also shown to doctors with medical training (although 'home-spun' doctors were quite successful in curing both). A tradition bearer has described the situation in the following way:

In former times L. also used to deliver babies, but in 1925 or so, when I came here, she didn't any more, then women used to go to town. (RKM II 393, 119 (4) < Kambja (1985)).

A breakthrough in the people's attitudes is primarily connected with the introduction of a new generation of medicines – the antibiotics.⁴ Since then, folk and official medicine, though branches from the same root, have been drifting widely apart from each other. Stein Mathiesen has explained the difference between folk medicine and official medicine with the help of the following table:⁵

biomedicine	folk medicine
disease	illness
official	unofficial
diagnosis	divination
scientific laws	supernatural powers
medication, surgery	prayer/incantation
cure	heal
rehabilitation	miracle

Any contrasting of phenomena with each other brings into light their new aspects and essential differences. Even such schematic systematisation as the present one helps to illustrate different possibilities of healing and being healed, and suggests the evident merging points. This treatment clearly manifests great mental efforts and the stimulation of the patient's willingness to be healed, both being spheres where the folk medicine surpasses the official one.

So we can see that folk medicine pays more attention to the human psychic state and his untouched stores of energy, his wish to regain his health and willingness to be healed through purifying one's spiritual being. S. Mathiesen stresses the reliance of the official medicine on biochemical treatment of the patient and on the recognised laws of nature. The methods and remedies of the official medicine are sanctioned by social institutions, the treatment is to result in the restoration of the former health of the patient. The opposite side is based on the officially not recognised mental experience, supernatural forces and unrecognised laws of nature. From the remedies only verbal magic has been stressed, healing is associated with the confident expectation of a wonder. The given classification is somewhat one-sided. Folk medicine and official medicine have evolved in mutual interaction and for a lengthy period of their development they have been fairly similar to each other. Verbal magic has hardly ever been used alone, isolated from other techniques of treatment. Various other methods of treatment were always used parallelly with it, and often even preferred to it, including herbal medicines, massage, etc. For quite a while it has been a common practice to use medicines bought from a chemist's shop, or to combine these with home-made remedies. Some new practices and information has come in from the traditions and experience of other nations. Many techniques of manual therapy, such as correction of the patient's energy with the

healer's hands, etc., have been interpreted in a novel way. In this century the verbal magic has lost its position and is gradually disappearing from the set of techniques of folk medicine. Today the diagnosing methods of a professional physician may hardly differ from those of a witch doctor – in their relations with the patients both are relying on their own experience, professional skills and intuition. The medical knowledge of folk healers is often amateurish or home-spun, but quite extensive at that. In diagnosing a disease, folk medicine used, and still uses, various methods that correlate with the official medicine (palpation, anamnesis, in the last decades also consultations with 'official' doctors, lab tests, etc.) Many folk healers demand that patients come to them with a diagnosis and a note from an official physician suggesting the patient to see the folk healer. One of such healers is Laine Roht, also known as the witch of Kaika, who believes that the process of healing is more successful when both sides unite their forces to help the patient regain his/her health.⁶

What made people forsake the methods of folk medicine was the efficacy of biochemical remedies. It seems that only in isolated farms in bogs and deep forests, and in cases of certain illnesses, the traditional medicine managed to retain its priority. The spread of antibiotics brought about an irreversible withdrawal from the (oral) tradition. The skills and traditions of healing, accumulated in the course of centuries, tested through empirical experience and approved by our ancestors' families (or even wider social groups), were now falling into oblivion, people relied to them only in case of colds and other common diseases. In most cases they still preferred treatment with antibiotics.

The feeling of insecurity before, during, and after World War II, relatives and friends reported missing, repeated repressive actions from the government, were the factors that raised diviners and clairvoyants to a special status. The position of witch doctors, however, was influenced by the regular medical network rather than historical events. Because of the good reputation of hospitals people would not give birth to babies or treat serious diseases at home. Self-treatment was considered out-of-date, it belonged to the past. Official medicine gained credit for vaccination of infants that nearly eliminated fatal contagious infant diseases. I remember from my childhood old people telling stories about an outbreak of poliomyelitis in Estonia and their feelings of relief and gratitude for the vaccine that saved them miraculously.

Back to Folk Medicine?

It was probably the low selling price of medicines that conduced to their excessive usage. New remedies were attributed miraculous qualities. People thought that with these they could be cured of hopeless cases and incurable diseases, stop chronic inflammations and other serious illnesses. Optimistic

Lp. imearst !

Olen Teie juures teist
korda. Valud on ära läinud
ja loodan, et saan täiesti
terveks. Kui hea, et on
kelle poole oma hädadele
pöörduda !

Soovin Teile endale
tugevat tervist ja jaksu !

09. sept. 1989. . .

A text from the registration book of Laine Roht. The text is: Dear Healer! I'm visiting you for the second time already. The pains are gone and I hope to be wholly cured. How nice it is that there is someone to whom to come with one's troubles! I wish to you strong health and all the best!

prognoses of the 1960's foresaw the decline and eventual disappearance of the diseases before drugs. A similar atmosphere of the expectation of a wonder surrounded the then very common usage of chemicals. The latter was to procure good crops and to free us from all those unnecessary and hostile beings who caused illness. DDT and other poisons, for example, quite unmistakably reduced the number of 'useless' (so they claimed) birds and other creatures. People were not actually aware of the accumulation of chemicals in a living organism. The result was allergies and other diseases difficult to cure; these were the most frequent complaints of people who went to see folk healers within the past few decades. The crisis of biochemical medicine was further promoted by a rapid distribution of epidemics, mutated germs and carcinomas. As an old lady said: *Diseases are getting more and more, never have there been so many of them.*

Folk doctors in their treatment have always paid much attention to attempts to find out the cause of origin of the disease: together with the patient they are trying to specify that particular object or situation that may have caused the malady (the healer suggests different variants).⁷ Again, folk medicine tends to stress the so-called mental explanations of diseases (breaking of some rules of behaviour, wrong way of life, modern equivalents for the evil eye or curses), seconded by geographical ones (badly chosen places of living, veins of water, evil eye, etc.)

The official medicine prescribed each patient an allotted time of 10 minutes for consultations. During that time the physician had to communicate with the patient, fill in the case history, and so he or she had no time to lift his/her eyes from the paperwork. Such an anonymous and hasty communication precluded any chance for a mental contact and joint discussion between these two about the probable explanation of the origin of the disease. In most cases there was no time left to discuss the symptoms that were troubling the patient, or to try to find out the psychological or other factors that might have assisted the development of the disease. The narrow specialisation of doctors that was quite common in those days gave rise to folk legends about the patients' odysseys to different specialists, each of whom knew only a certain part of the patient and gave the patient a different diagnosis. Apart from the limited and superficial contacts between doctors and patients, such a specialisation degraded the outpatient clinics as well. It was much easier for patients, including those with psychosomatic diseases, to find contact with folk healers who could spare much more time and attention for them, treated them as personalities, communicated with them in an open way. Even in complicated cases the patient got a full round-up explanation for the nature, origin and cause of the disease. Hints at supernatural powers that the folk healer was supposed to control and use to cure the patient aroused hopes for miraculous healing, i.e. brought about a placebo effect. The establishment of the cause and origin of the disease often was accompanied by pre- or retrocognitive interpretation of the former life and health of the patient. These in their turn increased the patients' feelings of awe and respect towards the healer and trust in the diagnosis and the prescribed cure. J. Young has pointed out that several maladies are accompanied by an indeterminate psychical background.⁸ Maladies are more often than not psychosomatic, and not merely somatic.

The healing ritual of a witch doctor is by nature richer and wider than the reception of an official physician. Each therapeutic session contains several stages of different length and degree of emotional tension. The stage that medical anthropology classifies as prologue - recognition of the need to consult a doctor and the choice of one - actually forms a lengthy preliminary cycle

consisting of seeking information from the talks with one's friends, colleagues and other people. This communication is a kind of self-attunement through the so-called patient stories. L. Honko includes the preliminary diagnosis of an illness also as the prologue. The healing ritual consists of several stages: meeting and getting acquainted, convincing the patient in the trustworthiness of the healer, establishing the origin of the disease, casting spells, massage and other techniques, presentation of the final explanation of the disease, search for, elimination, or expulsion of the disease, giving of medications, etc. Then the healer is thanked and paid for his/her help.⁹ The determination and elimination of the disease under the patient's own eyes, the medications prepared (and enchanted) specially for him/her, secure the patient's active participation in the act of expulsion of the disease. The patient is not passive, he/she is included in the healing rite, the positive result of which is also dependent on him/herself. As for folk healers, it is their general repute and distinction that counts. In most cases a witch doctor is chosen by the patient on the basis of available information and current narratives; mostly the patient believes in the knowledge and skills of the healer before he starts the cure with him/her. Some conviction is also found in the course of treatment by the folk healer. They may describe some successful cases, the patient is given the registration books to read (L. Roht, A. Heintalu, a. o.), all of which are meant to help the visitor to assume the role of a successfully recovering patient and to convince oneself that this person has succeeded in healing very complicated diseases. Important are so called waiting-room stories.¹⁰ Patients tell each other stories about cases of miraculous healing. With the help of this he/she will start to believe that this doctor is able to deal of very hard cases. A correct attitude and faith in the healer and the process of healing functions as tokens of surety of recovery.

The role of the psychical component in the health condition of the Estonians was increased by the mental depression as well as lack of any creative and economic perspectives resulting from the totalitarian atmosphere of the 1970-s and 80-s. A certain part was surely also played by the perception of oneself as a member of an ethnic group without any future.¹¹

Psychic tensions and stress made people look for alternative therapies. They tried to find not only alternative medicaments, but whole ways of thinking and living - which might be called crisis of materialist world view and craving for idealism, or a need to find an alternative world outlook, a sudden and unconventional solution to one's problems. Therefore people appealed to witch doctors to find affirmation for the theories and experiments that they had read about in unofficial scientific books, looking for spiritual support from conversations, trying to define their personal experiences or paranormal abilities, or just wishing to hear their opinion about various problems. The communication

of the malingerers (from the conventional point of view) with witch doctors was by no means easy, since in the 1970-s the number of really ill patients increased, and so they often used an insignificant disease as a pretext for seeing the healers.

The popularity of folk medicine was further enhanced by the crisis of social optimism in the 1970-s. The increasingly severe governmental power was accompanied by a favourable attitude towards mysticism and witch doctors. Brian Inglis has described those years as the period of alleged experiments by the U. S. and S. U. in the field of hypnosis and unknown miraculous powers.¹² Let us remember at this point the attachment of the ageing statesman L. Brezhnev to people with paranormal powers, especially the phenomenon of D. Davidashvili who was directly associated with the health of the leader of the state. This was the period of circulating stories about the soviet authorities keeping exact accounts on folk healers and taking them to Moscow for secret experiments on every opportunity. It is claimed that this was the period when the first official documents certifying their right to heal were distributed to the witch doctors. In Estonia the first owners of such documents were said to be Vigala Sass (A. Heintalu) and Kaika Laine (L. Roht). They have admitted it themselves. It is not clear, however, how many officially recognised folk healers were there in the politically strictly controlled Estonia of the 70-s and 80-s. Anyway, there were others who could claim such documents.

Several trends of alternative medicine began to spread unofficially in 1970s. Groups of interested people and friends became vegetarians, advertised different ways of healthy diet. There was a rising interest in acupuncture and acupressure as well as in using needle-treatment. Books on the right diet, breathing, etc. by Gunnar Aarma changed hands. He was also one of the first mediators of yoga and Buddhism and macrobiotic diet as well as the initiator of the first fasting trips. Illegal translations of books by Castaneda, lectures on Buddhism, literature concerning oriental medicine and mysticism spread among people as well. Among other materials typewritten or photo copies of a book on medicinal plants by Maria Treben spread in town as well as in the country. That book impressed people of different social background and education. Unfortunately it is difficult to give a complete account of the literature spreading in typewritten copies from hand to hand among people in Estonia at that time. I have mentioned here some of the manuscripts I had a chance to read. Numerous books in Russian and other languages also spread. Publications of different levels spread among interested people especially in the field of parapsychology. Partly these were publications dating from the 19th century, but there were also contemporary popular and research publications as well as unofficial translations that were collected and exchanged.

At the beginning of 1980s the first public performances of miraculous healers took place. Already in 1970s several healers and enthusiasts of parapsychology popular today lectured in several parts of Estonia. They were invited to schools, clubs and small circles of interested people. All this was partly illegal. The society of oriental medicine of the University of Tartu led by Professor Aili Paju advertised herb-treatment and other methods of alternative medicine. At her initiative Vigala Sass met with people that had gathered in one of the biggest lecture-rooms of the University of Tartu in autumn 1981 and lectured on miraculous healing. Among other matters he presented miraculous cases of recovery from his own experience. This was the first public lecture of its kind. Since that time universities of culture and other centres of advanced training began to complete their programmes with parapsychology and lectures and subjects of esoteric healing. The number of such courses increased at the end of 1980s and the beginning of 1990s.¹³

News about the discovery of a miraculous remedy spread once in a while. A healer who was murdered during a robbery was considered the inventor of a universal remedy. Activated water and a miraculous remedy called AU-8, one of the manufacturers of which was the inventor of ferro-concrete Hint, caused even greater sensation. The liquid that was said to treat every illness was manufactured half-industrially. During the times of severe political censorship that remedy was sold at a rather high price. AU was accompanied by corresponding folklore: cases of recovery, prescriptions, etc.

In those years the police and state security officers often asked the witch doctors to help them find a lost person or object. In any case, the authorities of those times were favouring witch doctors and unexpectedly manifesting extrasensory powers with the accompanying (individual) explanations, rather than the traditional folk medicine. Paradoxically, the favourable time for folk healers and healing did not come before the continuity of the traditional healing practices was interrupted in most places in Estonia. At least, that's what happened to magical formulas, phlebotomy, massage, partly also to herbals medicine and other fields of folk medicine. The interruption of a tradition is not a question of a few decades, usually its roots are deeply in some social attitudes and historical changes. Knowledge originating from the different trends of the alternative medicine and traditional medicine of other peoples was compiled in their healing ritual by modern healers. By the medium of lectures and mass media such knowledge had a more general spread as well. Probably the right answer to the question asked above would be: there was no return to the traditional folk medicine, but general attitudes changed in favour of the alternative medicine influenced by mass media.

Changes in the Tradition of Magical Incantations

The decreasing willingness to inherit traditional knowledge, incl. the magical formulas, is not merely a problem of the present century. The possibilities to realise one's knowledge and skills differs from time to time. The position of a midwife in the previous and this century cannot be compared, and the position of folk healers in a village community has changed even more. It is not within the power of everybody, not even every chosen healer candidate, to accept the stressful, and yet responsible marginal status.

Coming back to the traditions of the Võnnu parish, let us try to find out why in a region that as late as in the 1950-s and 1960-s of the present century teemed with the bearers of ancient traditions, witches who possessed folk healing methods and magical formulas, the tradition of healing with incantations suddenly faded away. In 1986 there were only 3-4 folk healers in the parish, and no more than 10 persons who possessed healing incantations. And even these included several new settlers, people who at the end of World War II had been forced by the Nazis to leave their native villages beyond Lake Peipsi and to settle in Estonia. It appears from the archive records that people who returned to the motherland were bearers of notably ancient traditions. And not so much the conservative bearers of the local early Estonian traditions, but rather as persons who had grown up within the Russian (Orthodox) sphere of influence, a tradition more archaic that had better preserved the ancient verbal magic. So, for example, both L. Solna's and S. Nagel's heritage of incantations and healing methods had some peculiar traits. Both referred to their contacts with Russians, and even admitted having picked up some of their knowledge directly from them (RKM II 395, 358/9 (1); RKM II 397, 442/561 < Võnnu (1986)).

The folk healers of Võnnu of the 1950-s were of different social origin and level of education. However, it was by no means easy for them to transmit their knowledge, as those who had the required qualities often refused to accept the legacy.

I did ask her once - who are you going to leave your knowledge to? And she said, I have nobody to leave it to, I shall die with it. RKM II 393, 119 (4) < Kambja (1985).

Unlike the former taboos based on beliefs, the incantations and formulas were handed down to different people on several occasions.¹⁴ So, for example, I. Poska and M. Vuks, the healers of Võnnu, dispensed their knowledge more than once to the members of their families as well as other people whom they considered suitable as future healers. In the second half of the present century the inherited knowledge and skills were used by only a few heirs. Therefore, a folk healer could disregard his/her former transmission of knowledge to somebody else. The elder daughter of M. Vuks remembers:

... *Only recently the paper was still there. My mother wanted to leave it to me, it seemed, but I did not believe these things, and so I let it lie. But my sister accepted it.* RKM II 395, 268/9 (1) < Võnnu (1986).

The motivation of offering one's knowledge of incantations to one's grandchild has been quite different, resting on the religious attitude less common in Estonia, but in general internationally widespread:

Grandmother Miili Vuks used to say that she would have transmitted her healing lore, but you cannot bequeath it to the next generation. And she wanted to give these spells to me, but I - I was young and cock-sure - such obsolete superstitions... And you must have a dark complexion, and I had one. RKM II 395, 341 (1) < Võnnu (1986).

According to the accounts of the Võnnu folk healers, there have been other reasons for handing down the lore repeatedly. As this problem has been discussed in detail elsewhere,¹⁵ let us only list the probable reasons: ideological differences with one's parents who are healers, lack of interest or calling, an attitude of scepticism or intolerance towards the work of the predecessor, nasty character of either party.

My grandfather was Rootsi Piidre, he lived in Võnnu. He used to cure all diseases. He promised to leave all his spells to his son, but he was a spiteful man and his son did not want his spells. RKM II 397, 488 (1) < Võnnu (1986).

The heir apparent could reject the legacy, explaining it with his/her incompetence, unwillingness to take up the role of a folk healer.

Thematic changes and narrowing of the formulas are better illustrated by the proportions of different kinds of incantations. Until 1984 the Estonian Folklore Archive accumulated magical incantations against 243 diseases. Wider complexes of maladies have been subdivided into different types of incantations, redactions and sub-redactions. There are 10 types of formulas against the 'underground' (a skin disease), 16 types against erysipelas, 11 types against stroke. Between 1984-1990 these figures are decreased. Incantations for regulating a social relations, incantations connected with mythological beings and nature phenomena have disappeared. Economic charms are forgotten and using of healing words has narrowed. It can be explained partly with the degeneration of the traditional beliefs. If people do not remember what the 'underground folk' are, they can see no purpose for the incantations against the 'underground folk'. In this period the archive acquired many manuscript books of folk healers containing old traditional incantations, and these helped to make the overall picture more archaic. Quite prominent are the formulas that have changed their function and that are meant to calm the children or to ease their pain, particularly the super-type *Crow take the pain*. Today, however, not every

parent is able to calm a hurt child or to relieve its pain with incantation. The continuity of the tradition is so seriously interrupted that there are many families where even grandparents have not heard these spells at home nor practised them in their youth.

The narrowing of the stock of texts is a natural phenomenon associated with the decay of the tradition of incantations. Writing down the spells is also an ancient custom¹⁶ known also to other nations, such as, for example, Russians, Latvians and Germans.¹⁷ Although a healer may possess a whole manuscript book full of magical formulas, he/she does not necessarily use them all, but only two or three most customary ones.

The polyfunctionality of texts has been characteristic of the magical incantations for quite a long time. Today it is more widespread than in the previous century or at the beginning of the present century. Often the smallest adaptations or replacements are introduced in the text, in order to adjust it to another person or disease.¹⁸ So, Aino Teppan from Maarja-Magdaleena applied formulas that conventionally were used to cure snake-bites, to relieve erysipelas or different inflammatory diseases. Her mother-in-law left her a book of different incantations. As one of her neighbours has said:

Teppani Aino from Savikoja can heal. Her mother-in-law was a healer of 'rose' (erysipelas). One cannot say about somebody who can heal that he is a witch. Well, I suppose she learned from her mother-in-law, as she was healing or helping someone. RKM II 367, 53 (28) < M-Magdaleena (1983).

From the formulas written down by her grandmother, the healer chose some that suited her personality, leaving out the so-called dangerous texts. She did not think it sensible to learn all incantations by heart. She avoided blood-stopping spells, as those could spoil house work or hamper the process of healing. (according to some ancient beliefs someone who knew blood-stopping formulas could have a bad influence on milk and ale, complicate birth-giving and cause difficulties in slaughtering animals.) Even her mother-in-law had avoided blood-stopping spells. As the midwife of the village she never learned them by heart, in order to prevent accidental stopping or starting of bleeding at delivery. Even an uncontrolled recollection of the formula might have caused either of them. According to her own words, A. Teppan uses these written notes to refresh her memory, just like her mother-in-law used to do.

These two healers from Maarya-Magdaleena parish belong to those who have inherited, and not rejected, the lore; their explanations of the diseases and incantations are based on the tradition. Both of them are the chosen heirs of their mothers-in-law who were locally recognised healers. In both cases the correctness of the choice was proved by another event - both of them have

'untied the rope of malice' (a migrating rope-like host of sciara army worms, feared as a harbinger of war and misfortune) - an event which traditionally predicts and confirms the status of a folk healer.¹⁹

The note-books with magical incantations were widespread all over Estonia, except the south-eastern part, and the fate of many of those writings is characterised by the following report:

Our grandfather also used to have one. He put on grey gloves, circled the place where the snake had bitten - the pain was gone. Those words are all in the book, grandfather wrote them down, but who knows where Jüri has put the book. KKI 10, 148 (23) < Mustjala (1949).

The number of the probable formal realisations has decreased at the present time. Some of the healing incantations in the form of letter formulas (incl. the so-called birth-giving spells and fire spells) are circulating primarily among Christian groups in the composition of the so-called Heavenly Letters. Versed or runic incantations are falling into oblivion. The role of lengthy formulas containing contaminations is diminishing. The modern era seems to prefer short magical formulas. Often a magical activity is accompanied by a short incantation repeated three or nine times.

The spells and incantations change more readily than the rites and healing methods associated with them. The action accompanying an incantation (demarkation of the diseased area, crossing the sick spot or the remedy, symbolic rites of washing, anointing, burning, etc., the disease, offering the curing water of salt to an old sacrificing stone or site, cross-roads, or some other critical place) have survived without changing much within the past few centuries. The ideology of healing and the principal religious explanations for the actions also have not found much reinterpretation.

New Incantations

The dating of a wider use of new incantations, i.e. that not connected with illness, is fraught with difficulties. Incantation has often been performed in solitude, motivated by an inner conviction. On lecture tours I have met people who have either during the lecture or in subsequent private conversations admitted that they have used words of incantation, which they either remembered from childhood, had heard from others, or read in books or magazines. Incantations have also been conducted in small, chiefly intellectual, circles in 1980s and 1990s. Groups familiar with the folk tradition have usually turned to words handed down by that tradition.

Praying to the Sun on the island of Kihnu in the summer of 1989 with participants in a course for game-leaders from the Refresher School of Cultural Workers. It was a dusky time in the afternoon of a rainy day, so dusky that we had to switch on electric lights to be able to conduct our workshop in the culture centre of Kihnu. All of a sudden there was a breakdown of some kind and the lights went off.

Somebody had an idea to sing an entreaty to the Sun to come out, so that we could continue our work. We formed a circle and began the 'Prayer to the Sun' from Viljandimaa county. In the charm, various tasty tidbits are offered to the Sun to allure it out from behind the clouds.

To our utter amazement it was only a few minutes after the end of the song that the sun did come out — for the first time that day. The surprise left all the participants spellbound.'

Here is another case, from the same period, of the use of authentic incantations .

Praying to the rain in the spring of 1990 in Antsla.

The folklore school was on its traditional spring tour of Southern Estonia. We were singing and dancing in the culture centre of Antsla. Among those present there was a man who had participated in the praying to the Sun described above. He asked for our help in praying to the rain, since there had been a severe drought for two weeks in the region. He had asked the same in Värskä a few days earlier but I had been afraid to undertake the incantation and fortunately circumstances had ruled it out then. Now, however, there was no pretext to postpone it any more, so there was nothing for it but begin. While I, in a flurry, was trying to think of a suitable song, Grete, a little daughter of a participant in the course, started a song from Põlvamaa county: 'Brother Rain...'. I picked up the song and later continued with an improvisational appeal to the rain to be a friend and come to the rescue of those people. I do not remember the exact wording. Afterwards a local man told us that if we were to succeed, we would be genuine witches.

That evening I was very worried, it was as if I were carrying a great responsibility. I watched the news on TV - the weather forecast did not promise any rain.

At night I was woken up by the patter of rain against the window-pane. The first rain in two weeks - and immediately after the incantation?!

I was mystified, but happy.' (RKMI 26, 273/6 < Viljandi, 1991).



Healer Vigala Sass (Aleksander Heintalu) delivering a lecture.

The motivation behind the use of incantations, as well as the degree of belief in the effectiveness of the magic text, exhibit great variations. In general, however, such situations are characterized by half-playfulness and half-belief rather than firm conviction.

The inventory of Estonian incantations does not cover the interests of all of their potential users. Missing, for instance, are words for the initiation/inauguration of the sayer of incantations. Also, many transitional incantations are short and based on Christian motifs. Present-day users tend to prefer incantations that are longer and that have preserved the message of the pre-Christian native religion. For the socio-political purposes of the so-called public incantations in the 1980s the Christianity-centeredness of incantations was, as a rule, unacceptable. The oldest layers of heritage - and incantations were regarded as belonging to these - absolutely had to contain motifs of the primeval native religion, held to be ever close to the hearts of Estonians. The tradition of incantations, however, displays a great number of international influences. Nevertheless, incantations have, more than other types of folklore, been made to serve interpretations in the spirit of national ideology. Writers of the 19th century used to associate them with the oldest layers of ethnic religion, and accordingly with the essence of the Estonian national character.²⁰ Later,

the incantations have been searched for traces of the authentically Proto-Fenno-Ugric. It was their very unsuitability for the purpose, their incongruity with the basic national ideology, that restricted research into and publication of incantations, and that stands in the way of their widespread use today.

With the Estonian tradition lacking suitable incantations, the obvious alternative was to turn to the Finnish and Karelian ones, the *runo*-form, length, and contents of which were considerably more in accord with the concept of 'the genuine incantation'. Finnish incantations have been copied and stored for use by healers (e.g., Sass of Vigala at the beginning of the 1980s) as well as by ordinary people interested in the subject. The goal has, as a rule, been to translate and adapt a useful text, appropriate in its form and powerful in its contents. The similarity and supposed genetic ties of the traditional heritages of the two peoples has served as a justification of the practice.

Among authentic incantations, the ones most widely used are healing incantations. Since there is little chance of obtaining the incantations straight from the tradition or by way of direct inheritance, printed material has been resorted to. In earlier decades, one of the most popular textbooks and sources of inspiration was found in 'Mytische und magische Lieder der Esten' by A. H. Neus and Fr. R. Kreutzwald,²¹ while in recent decades a great number of texts have come from the volume devoted to incantations of 'The Anthology of Estonian Folk Songs', published in 1974.²² The latter contains a selection of incantations whose form is more closely linked with that of Estonian folk songs (*regivärss*).

There is, however, a widespread practice of using short formulas that cannot be traced back to any reliable source. Most of such verbal formulae are clearly dependent on the concrete situation which has inspired their creation. The need to use a verbal address when turning to the objects of nature, trees and other plants that are being grown or gathered for the purpose of healing has been stressed by healers as well as lecturers on the subject.

Well, if we take water from the spring and want to use it to heal ourselves, well then we'll have to bow to the spring and thank it for the healing water and give it an offering, too (RKM, Video 52, 27 < Urvaste).

Incantations also frequently derive from dreams - a source well-known in tradition. Personal protective incantations/charms have been acquired from various courses on Oriental medicine or meditation, or created in a flash of inspiration. Also frequent is selecting a passage from the catechism, or employing the passage in the Christian church calendar corresponding to the date of the healing procedure as healing words read upon administering the medicine. The use of church calendars as a source of healing incantations is a relatively recent phenomenon, obviously brought about by the lack of traditional

incantations, whereas healing with prayers and hymns is an old custom, known to occur with a number of peoples.²³

Incantation Rites

While healing incantations, in whatever way they may have been obtained, are usually employed in the absence of a wider audience, there emerged, at the end of the 1980s, a completely new way of using incantations that I hereby venture to term the incantation rite. In fact, incantation rites have varying backgrounds and different circles of adherents.

The pioneer of *new shamanism* in Estonia is Vigala Sass (Sass of Vigala). At the end of the 1980s he built, with the help of friends but following his own design, a so-called *incantation site* to hold rituals at. The cult site with its enormous stones brought here from elsewhere, is situated in a grove between Sass's house and the sea. The outer circle is girdled with wheel-crosses several meters high and with wooden gongs covered with magic signs. Adjacent to it is a big village swing and a stone on which a fire is lit at the beginning of each ritual. In the outer circle there is a Finno-Ugric conical tent with a covering spread over a frame of poles - in this particular case made of unstripped wood - with a fireplace inside. Among other things, the tent serves as a place where ointments are prepared. The inner circle, the heart of the cult site, is inaccessible to strangers. One can enter the place only when guided by the host (Sass of Vigala) and, as a rule, as participant in a ritual. Sass of Vigala has had contacts with two different traditional shamans - an Altaic one and a Ngassan one. In designing the cult site, he has also resorted to literature. Ever since the first incantation ritual at the winter solstice of 1989, the so-called fire incantation, a shamanic drum has accompanied the rituals. The first incantations were performed by Sass alone, with the cult site closed to everybody else. There was no audience, though members of his family helped him with the preparations. During these incantations Sass claims to have had genuine experiences of a traditional shaman which bear a distinct resemblance to the shamanic experiences of receiving the power/spirit/energy and status/position (meeting the spirit of the tribe, rebirth, etc.).

The so-called public incantations, consciously aimed at an audience, were initiated by the young people gathered in the national heritage preservation club 'Tõlet'. Their first incantations and the whole performance have been recorded in a written publication that also includes the texts of the incantations.²⁴ Fairly complicated in their form, the incantations used in the performance imitate genuine tradition only by their use of alliteration and assonance.²⁵ To archaize the text, verbal and nominal endings from earlier periods of the

development of the language²⁶ are added while most words belong to present-day Estonian. The incantations seek to imitate the form of Estonian folk songs (*regivärss*), yet they have often been grouped in four-verse stanzas, which in authentic tradition happens extremely rarely. Also, the improvisational incantations are, as a rule, long, considerably longer than the authentic ones. In their structure, the new incantations approach prayers, oaths, and invocations. Typical of the age are allusions to a disgraceful past (*'what have you, the world, been doing/ deserting your old gods'*), and the calling back of old powers/spirits. Added are asseverations that the unsullied past has been kept intact in the heart of hearts.

Another, more untraditional branch of neoshamanism arrived in Estonia in 1989 by the medium of Jonathan Horwitz, a jury member for the festival of visual anthropology organised by Mark Soosaar. Students, artists, philologists, physicists attended the course of shamanism he offered.

Incantations were begun to be performed at different events organised by leaders of popular movements. Among these was the incantation of mother tongue that took place in Tallinn striving to establish Estonian as an official language of the state; the so-called oath of the University of Tartu, and others. Hundreds of thousands of people of the three Baltic States stood holding their hands forming an uninterrupted chain in the roads of their countries on the 50th anniversary of the secret pact of Molotov-Ribbentrop. Estonians repeated the words read over the radio. In the dusk Soviet symbols were thrown into the fire on the Estonian-Latvian boarder, accompanied by claims of freedom repeated after the leader of the ritual in both languages.

These and other common incantations not mentioned here were very emotional and inspired power, solidarity and confidence. Participants in such rites felt themselves as one nation having the same objective.

Among the incantations organised officially there are also those performed at the opening ceremonies of new (new sacred places have been created in several places in Estonia chosen by persons with extrasensory powers) or restored sacred groves, places of sacrifice, and the like. More impressive among these was the restoration of the old Samma sacred grove in the parish of Viru-Nigula in May 1989, while 150 oaks were planted under the instruction of persons with extrasensory powers. Young followers of the Taara faith from Tartu, foresters from Sonda and Viru-Nigula collective farm supported the initiative of the society of local history at Samma. People from all over Estonia travelled there to plant the oaks. The following instruction was published: *To disturb the tree less it should be approached from the West and the tree should be asked forgiveness for disturbing it. The tree is dug out with the quadrangle turf beginning from the North and moving counterclockwise.*²⁷ A sacrificial mys-

tery play was performed by Jaan Kiho company. A year later a memorial stone to the local sorceress Kongla Anne was unveiled and a rite of incantation was performed. The incantations of people that had gathered for the day of local lore were led by Vigala Sass. He used his public incantation for that:

*Nature our father,
We are his children,
in the name of the spirit of tribe -
Look after us and protect us.*

The rite that lasted almost for an hour imitated the ones performed in the place of cult at his home. People stood in a line and holding each other by shoulders followed the way shown by the leader of incantations. At the moment of culmination a common incantation was repeated after the leader. Let us keep in mind that as a rule the text of an authentic incantation and evidently texts of pagan prayers as well were not repeated verse by verse, but the prayer was recited by the offering priest alone. The presence of the community was a matter of course.

The words used at an incantation rite can be more complicated. For instance, at the foundation of the Forestry Corporation in autumn 1989, Vigala Sass performed an incantation from which only vowels could be heard. The following public incantation had to be repeated by all participants in the rite. The rite was performed on Toome Hill in Tartu. On the sacrificial stone a fire had been lighted. The participants stood in a circle around the leader of the incantations. The flag of the corporation was consecrated as well. The reason for the performance of a pagan rite was the ethnic religion (as well as new paganism inspired by it indirectly) being close to nature and having some common features with the green movement. In a way such a rite can be considered as an opposition to the revival of Baltic-German influenced movement of corporations. With the help of a rite of incantation they tried to create their own original rite of incorporation.

However, at the rites of incantations or at (opening) ceremonies including word charm, compilations were performed where abstracts from traditional incantations and Kalevala-metric songs corresponding to the theme were added to the text of the author. An example of this was the incantation of fire performed by Anne Maasik at the Tartu Song Festival in 1990.

The texts of official common incantations are usually written by poets. Although in form there is similarity with the poetry of 'Tôlet', the ideological messages are clearer. (L.Hainsalu can be given as an example:

*Our past is centuries long,
our future is centuries long,
We are the keepers of the past and the future.*

*We do not let go; we will not grow weary .
Coming from the night of shame we have become clean.
We are free; we are free in spirit.)*

Smaller places of sacrifice or worship were founded by rather different people at their homes. Incantations performed there are not meant for public use but for themselves. Improvisations in some cases originated from home rituals, for instance while celebrating important dates with their friends in the fields of energy or places of worship created by themselves. Besides such improvisations short formulas or what have been learned from books have been used. There is no big difference in content or form between those and the ones performed during the days of local history. The imitation of Kalevala-metric song is characteristic here. Usually these are not individual applications. The applicant is often collective or the blessing extends to a bigger group - all these components are not traditional. These incantations are addressed to the so-called deities of the earth. Either intentionally or out of ignorance the structure and subsequence of the parts of the incantations are untraditional as well.

Besides the form there are greater differences particularly in the performance. Incantations during bigger rites with the leader and choir and where every line is repeated have been mentioned above. This has happened also in cases when a reciting tune has been chosen for the incantation. Thus big numbers of people repeated 'The Spell of Keeping Off Evil' sung by Jaak and Mart Johanson. That incantation written down from Ell Savisikk of the parish of Kolga-Jaani at the beginning of the century was not performed as a song originally. It suited well for the open-air concert of 1988, though. Incantations could be performed in the accompaniment of a shamanic drum as mentioned above. Such a performance has been used by other performers as well (A. Maasik).

The description of the so-called secret individual incantations used alone, in the circle of one's family or closer friends, has been avoided in the present paper. Several people are in the habit of using incantations in the situation of crisis. Word spells are used before longer journeys, riskier undertakings, during festivals or to prevent illnesses. Having been created by the same era they do not usually differ from the public incantations in form or structure.

The quests for national identity in the field of culture in 1970s and 1980s inspired and influenced the formation of new incantations and rites of incantations. I will name some of them here. A closer look into reciprocal connections will remain for another time. The quests of V. Tormis in the field of Kalevala-metric songs; expeditions made by K. Põllu to the eastern Finno-Ugric tribes and his series of 'Ancient Dwellers'. The theatrical experiments of J. Tooming; expeditions, books and especially films by L. Meri that evaluate Estonian and

Finno-Ugric culture; modern runic calendars based on the so-called Estonian own system of chronology compiled by K. Kama and national ideas of K. I. Eller. Paleoastronomic interpretations of myths and new mythology of 1970s. Evaluation of old folk songs and dances initiated by the groups 'Leegayus', 'Hellero' and 'Leigarid' led by Igor Tõnurist, Mikk Sarv and Kristjan Torop.

U. Lippus has called a part of this movement and the spirituality accompanying it the quest for the Finno-Ugric primeval chant. In some way or other 1970s and the years following them were not aimed only to become acquainted with our culture and to the obstinate preservation of it, but also to acquire the knowledge of the spiritual tradition of Finno-Ugric peoples linguistically kindred to us. Even if the knowledge was not very thorough, it still helped to give evaluations.

Presumably public incantations will preserve their role in the movement and societies of local history that appreciate ethnic religion as well as among the followers of the Taara faith in the near future. The rites of incantations may also be preserved by those interested in alternative medicine and perhaps by some of the followers of the New Age movement - but in that case with a lot greater influence from the East. Family rites of incantations will have future among those trying to make family traditions more expressive. The so-called secret or individual incantations will probably live on as quietly and persistently as before.

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¹Kõiva, M. Ühe kihekonna rahvaarstid. In: *Parapsühholoogia ja piirinähtused*. Viljandi, 1991, p. 32.

²Rooks, G. Ebaarstimine Eestis. In: *Eesti Arst*. 1929, No. 10, pp. 377-382.

³The manuscripts of Anna Kuusik are located in the Estonian Folklore Archives in fonds ERA II 202, 30, etc. and RKM II 166, 160, etc. We can find that most of the incantations she wrote as a young woman. Some of the incantations she acquired from the oral tradition, some she has let her friends write them into these. Some of the incantations have been copied from other manuscripts and also from publications.

⁴Kleinmann, A. *Patients and healers in the context of culture*. An exploration between anthropology, medicine and psychiatry. Berkeley, 1980; Wiegelmann, G. *Volksmedizin heute*. Münster, 1987, p. 2.

⁵Mathiesen, S. R. Faith healing and concepts of illness. An Example from Northern Norway. In: *Temenos*. 1989, No. 25, pp. 64-65.

⁶RKM, Video 52, 27< Urvaste (1993)

⁷Honko, L. Varhaiskantaiset taudinselytykset ja parantamisinäytelmä. In: *Jumin keko*. Tietolipas 17. Porvoo, 1960, pp. 83-84.

⁸Young, A. The anthropologies of illness and sickness. In: *Annual Review of Anthropology*. 11. 1982, p. 265.

⁹See Note 7, pp. 83-84.

¹⁰See Alver, B. G. e.a. *Parantamisen taitajat*. Helsinki, 1987.

¹¹See the articles of Bromlei and other ethnographers published in the end of 1970-s. and in the beginning of 1980-s in *Sovetskaya etnografiya*. The same views were reflected in the conferences in Soviet Russia (for example *Vsesoyuznaya sessiya po itogam polevyh etnograficheskikh i antropologicheskikh issledovaniy 1982-1983 godov*. Tezisy dokladov. Chernovtsy, 1984) and were included in the compulsory materials to the students in the universities.

¹²Inglis, B. *The Paranormal*. An encyclopedia of psychic phenomena. London, Glasgow, 1987, p. 27.

¹³At the same time falls greater interest for the problems of national culture and identity. Concludingly this situation has been described in several articles. See Rüütel, I. Kultuur ja rahvuslik identiteet. In: *Eesti püsimajäämine*. Tallinn, 1993, pp. 49-52; also in *Avtentichnyi folklor v sovremennom folklornom dvizhenii*. Tallinn, 1993. In the end of the 1980-s folklorists held hundreds of lectures on the traditional folklore and world view.

¹⁴Kõiva, M. *Eestonskije zagovory. Klassifikatsiya i zhanrovye osobennosti*. Dissertatsiya na soiskanie uchonoj stepeni kandidata filologicheskikh nauk. Tallinn, 1990, pp. 188-189.

¹⁵Op cit, p. 190.

¹⁶Op cit, p. 190, etc.; Kõiva, M. Tähtkombineerimise näidussõnadena. In: *Eesti TA Fr. R. Kreutzwaldi nim. Kirjandusmuuseumi 33. Kreutzwaldi päevade ettekannete teesid*. Tartu, 1989, p. 21.

¹⁷Information about Russian material can be found in: *Etnolingvistika teksta. Semiotika malyh form folklori*. Moskva, 1988; parallels from Latvia can be found in Straubergs, K. *Latviešu buramie vardi*. Rīga, 1939; for German material see Hoffmann-Krayer, E., Bächtold-Stäubli, H. *Handwörterbuch des deutschen Aberglaubens*. IX. Berlin, Leipzig, 1938.

¹⁸See Note 14, p. 81.

¹⁹Hiimäe, M. Vainukõis rahvapärimestes ja looduses. In: *Eesti Loodus*. 1984, p. 453.

²⁰See Note 14, p. 20.

²¹Kreutzwald, Fr. R., Neus, H. *Mythische und magische Lieder der Ehsten*. St. Petersburg, 1854.

²²Tedre, Ü. (ed.). *Eesti Rahvalaulud*. Antoloogia. III:3. Tallinn, 1974.

²³See Note 14, p. 108, etc.; Alver, B. G., Selberg, T. Alternative medicine in today's society. In: Kvideland, R., Sehmsdorf, H. K. (eds.). *Nordic Folklore. Recent studies*. Bloomington, Indianapolis, 1989, p. 213.

²⁴Toomet, L., Leete, A. Tõleti avalikud loitsud. In: *Hiis*. No. 5. 1993.

²⁵Op cit, p. 13.

²⁶Op cit, p. 12.

²⁷*Samma ohvrihiis*. X kodupaiga päev. 1990, p. 3.

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