

owners said *kuriskons* together with the *Vösyas* (as a rule, during sacrificing). In other cases the role of the *Vösyas* was performed by the house-owner.

According to the ethnographers *kuriskons* were also pronounced by the *Vösyas* aloud, in a sing-song manner. Perhaps, much depended on dialects and local traditions of pronouncing *kuriskons*. House-owners pronounced *kuriskons* in the narrow circle and here their oratory was not as important as in the case of a *Vösyas*'s.

It is probable that the observed 'double circle' of prayings could shape the two manners of *kuriskon* performing: 'oratory' and melodious (melodic-recitative).

In the descriptions of *kuriskons* long (prolonged) prayings up to half an hour recited by the *Vösyas* are mentioned. The artistic form of *kuriskons* was formed and perfected just in the creative work of the *Vösyas*. At the same time in calendar rites many rituals required a short prayer. A great number of Udmurt *kuriskons* are rather short formulas.

Perhaps just the *kuriskons* recited by house-owners (in the field, by the river, at home, in the home *qala*) used to be short and consist in verbal formulas of prayers.

Notes

¹Functional index can be combined, forming contextual polyfunctional dependence.

POLTERGEIST IN FOLKLORE AND BELIEFS OF THE KOMI PEOPLE

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The famous Finnish linguist and ethnologist Mathias Aleksanteri Castrén visited the basin of the Lower and Middle Pechora in 1840 during his first long-lasting and fruitful research expedition in North Eurasia (1838-1844). During his stay with the Nenets, Komi and Russian inhabitants, the Finnish scholar got into a regrettably unpleasant situation. He was considered to be a wizard.

This story began in the Russian old-believers' village of Ust-Tsilma. Culture, everyday life and psychology of the Russian old-believers is very specific

because of their special historical fate. It is very difficult to say, why Castrén could not come to an understanding with the people of Ust-Tsilma. The scholar himself explained it in such a way: 'A *raskolnik* is always ready to curse everybody, because he considers himself better than others... Therefore it is not surprising that they looked at me, a Protestant, very unfriendly. They said that I was a wizard, arsonist, poisoner of rivers and wells, that I had the acquaintance of the evil spirits and with their help I had done terrible things in Ust-Tsilma.'¹

Subsequent events testify that it is unlikely that the religious factor prevailed in this conflict. Castrén went away from the inhospitable Ust-Tsilma after he had felt the direct threat of force coercion on him. But moved to the Komi village Izhma not far from Ust-Tsilma where the orthodox people lived, the Finnish scholar faced the same situation. The rumours about Castrén the Wizard preceded his coming, and the North Komis (*Izhemtsy*) famous for their hospitality, greeted him very unfriendly.

Unfortunately Castrén's arrival coincided with the event which struck the whole village. In an Izhma peasant's house a reindeer skin and a reindeer-skin overcoat fell down from the stove by themselves. An invisible hand threw scissors over the chamber with such force that they thrust into the wall. A bucket of water began to swing. The rumours about the tricks of the foreign wizard were going around.

Castrén was apprehensive of such a reputation, that is why together with the local official he came to the ill-fated house; there was a crowd of people and the priest with the cross in his hands. As the scholar wrote in his diary, his aim was 'somehow to make them change their mind about my behaviour'.² Castrén was a very religious person, but in this situation he carefully looked for materialist reasons to explain what had happened. Soon they were found: a sick man sleeping on the stove could throw the things down, including the scissors. The case with the bucket Castrén explained in a different way: it was standing on a badly nailed floorboard. Nevertheless, these reasons seemed not very convincing for the peasants. So, the Orthodox priest approached the incident in a irrational way. He said prayers for deliverance from the demon's tricks all night long.

Because of the lack of information it is hard to explain whether it were really the so-called anomalous natural phenomena which took place in the Komi village of Izhma 150 years ago; although the fact of people's perception of such phenomena is very interesting. Poltergeist (literally 'thundering spirit') as an anomalous natural phenomenon now evokes great interest. The folklorists can also make their contribution to the solution of some mysterious anomalous phenomena. An opportunity to look at some religious beliefs and folklore characters in a new way is very important.

During ethnographic research of the Komi inhabitants of the Pechora in 1977, we recorded (on the tape, too) a whole set of stories about a mysterious being who lived in the small settlement of Lyuba-Ivan (about 150 km up the river Vel, the tributary of the Pechora), so called after the name of its founder (Ivan, Lyuba's son). On the one side, these stories remind us of the plots in the Komi folklore about the meeting with 'the evil spirit', on the other side, they have some essential differences.

All information about the mysterious being was received in three adjacent settlements (the villages of Kodach, Mitrofanovo and Vanpi of Troitsko-Pechorsky district of the Komi). The recordings were made in the village Kodach from Feodor M., born in 1912; Klavdia G., born in 1912; Vasili M., born in 1935; in Vanpi from Vasili Sh., born in 1924; Glafira Sh., born in 1924; in Mitrofanovo from Pyotr L., born in 1911.

Two masters – Lyuba Ivan and Rödö Jak (Jakov Rodionovich) lived in a small village at the Upper Vel. Once a family spirit, *kikimora* (in Pechorian *kikimera*) settled in Lyuba-Ivan's place. Moreover, the narrators noted a convention of this name: *We call it kikimera* (Klavdia G.), *A devil or kikimera, they say, lives there* (Feodor M.). There are only conjectures about how and why the *kikimora* settled in Lyuba-Ivan's place: *Probably somebody let her in or brought her; they say somebody let her in. Or: It seems that it was Lyuba Ivan who let her in... Rödö's wife went down to the sauna and there she crocheted a beautiful handkerchief... Lyuba Ivan thought: what is this beautiful thing lying here and glowing? He took it into his house and that's where it all started...* Descriptions of a *kikimora*'s appearance are also vague, although there have been attempts to relate it with the folklore prototype: *Sometimes she appears as a girl, sits on a shed and combs her hair* (Vasili M.); *Someone saw a girl sitting on a bath-house and combing her hair. Her hair was long, yellow, beautiful, like silk* (Klavdia G.), *They say that they saw her as a woman* (Glafira Sh.). In all these facts there was no reference on a concrete witness. It is interesting to note that Klavdia G., although she told about the appearance of a *kikimora*, refused to record this story on the tape recorder, saying that she did not well know what a family spirit looked like.

At the same time the stories about *kikimora*'s doings have, as usual, concrete references. Glafira Sh.'s father was the witness when a *kikimora* began to throw felt boots to him and 4 hunters, as they stayed overnight in Lyuba-Ivan; she also threw a stove door at one of them and cut his brow; as he said, felt boots were a trifle, they were soft. Feodor M. affirmed that a knife was thrown at him. Vasili Sh. reported that *kikimora* threw things, too, and added that it was necessary to 'encourage' her. *Kikimora* threw a mitten at the hunter Ögrö Nikolai, but after his 'encouragement' she threw an axe (with its flat side) at him

(Klavdia G.). Besides, as all informants said, the hobby of the inhabitant of Lyuba-Ivan was to hide things, i.e. then they were found in some other place. The most massive object transferred by *kikimora* from one place to another was a barrel with frozen water, which was transferred from the house to the shed (Klavdia G.). Sometimes *kikimora* uttered strange sounds, *as though it walked about at nights. One day she walked like a bird, on another in the boots, sometimes in the top-boots. In different ways...* (Feodor M.).

As informants affirm, there had been some attempts to drive the *kikimora* out from Lyuba-Ivan's house. First a priest was called, but his prayer-books were thrown out of the house by an unknown force (Vasili M.). Then police was called; they pitched a tent near the house, but at night *kikimora* hid the policemen's things. The policemen's efforts were of no avail (Vasili Sh., Feodor M., Klavdia G.).

These mysterious occurrences took place in Lyuba-Ivan's house for some years: people have mentioned three years (Glafira Sh.), 5-6 years (Vasili M.); but then they ended as suddenly as they had appeared. Here are some alleged details of her disappearance: *Once the master comes home and sees that the house burns with a blue flame. He runs, but there is no fire. But the kikimora disappeared since that time* (Vasili M.). It is interesting to note that the untypical for the Komi folklore narrative about a building seized by fire, which is quite harmless for it, is recorded just in this district. The reports of eyewitnesses watching the houses seized by a 'cold fire' were published in central press not long ago. Since these reports, as well as other publications about the cases of poltergeist appeared only in the past few years, it is safe to say that they were not the base for the stories about *kikimora* of Lyuba-Ivan. At the same time, there is no doubt about the similarity between these stories and the present phenomenon: the mysterious sounds, moving or throwing the objects, a hypothetical possibility of contact ('rousing a *kikimora*'). The unnaturally cold fire is obviously an evidence of some energy concentrating in this place.

The character of the lowest mythology personifying the anomalous natural phenomena similar to the poltergeist was recorded in the Komi folk beliefs as early as in the middle of the past century. The priest Ivan Popov in his description of folk demonology paid enough attention to the figure of *titimera*. By the materials he gathered from the Komi inhabitants of the basin of the Sysol, *titimera* was the name for an ugly doll made by the wizards and hid by them in some dwelling houses. The activity of this malicious being consisted in uttering sudden strange sounds (moans, laughter, cry, knocking, whistling), throwing home utensils at night, pulling the blanket from a sleeper, and so on.³ In spite of some differences in descriptions of the appearance of Pechora's *kikimera* and Sysol's *titimera* it is, of course, in fact the same character of the Komi folk beliefs and folklore.

In the field notes of ethnographer L. Gribova there are facts that this folklore character was known by Komi living on the Upper Vychegda, but there it was called *bubula*. The memorates recorded by her tell about following tricks of this being: it settled in one of the houses, moved the furniture, threw dishes, made the samovar with tea jump on the table. In another case it is described how the rifles, standing in the corner of the house, began 'to dance' by themselves. One more informant told how somebody threw things down from a stove in an empty house.⁴

If we may assume that the Komi folklore characters of *kikimora* and *bubula* are, in fact, personifications of prolonged anomalous poltergeist-like phenomena, then similar single anomalies could be the real base for the appearance of original ideas about the *doppelgänger* soul (*ort*) of the Finno-Ugric peoples. According to the present Komi religious ideas, the man's *doppelgänger* soul or *ort* appears as the death forerunner. *Ort* usually is invisible, but displays itself by sudden inexplicable sounds. Noise is heard on the attic, or as a knock to the door or its cracking. The furniture moves by itself, somebody invisible throws the dishes or other things on the floor. Different objects disappear, but then appear in not intended for them places and so on.⁵ So, *ort* does the same things that *kikimora* does. It is interesting to note that the cold blue fire also figures in the ideas about *ort*, but it is not a manifestation of *ort* itself, but flares up after its traces.⁶

Literature

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