

beginning of the 20th century. This tradition can of course also be associated with the werewolf tradition in Sweden, about which there is abundant material from the 19th century, mainly from Middle and North Sweden.

If we compare the supposed killings of man in folklore with official sources, such as the church registers, it becomes quite clear that just a very limited number can be verified. In some cases, however, there are indications that children really have been kidnapped and killed by wolves. However, most of the supposed killings, often told in local tradition, can not be verified and are probably just good folklore.

As demonstrated, the hateful attitude towards a wolf can be followed from the old agrarian to the modern society. But there are also some differences worth to notice:

The fear for the wolves in the agrarian society had a real economic base. The killings of domestic cattle could lead to ruin or at least serious damage for a farmyard. Even if there are a substantial material about attacks on humans, the dominating material, especially from memorat and folk-belief, deals with threats against the domestic animals.

The knowledge of the wolves and their behaviour as well as experiences from seeing a wolf were in older times much deeper. This was the case during most of the 19th century.

Today, on the other hand, the knowledge is rare, except among the specialists and other limited groups. The fear is not mainly economically based, but focuses on supposed threats against human lives. It could be compared to other dangers in the urban society.

In old times the folklore was attached to the wolf itself, today it deals to a high degree with those who defend the wolves' existence in the Swedish forests. The focus of the danger has shifted from the wolf to its defenders, the man himself.

VITAL ENERGY, SPIRITS AND GODS IN MARI FOLK MEDICINE

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Traditional medicine of the Maris is based on the theory of the omnipotent power of energy *yu*. They believe that only the knowledge of such energy

gives a person the possibility to cure, to practise witchcraft, clairvoyance and even makes him stronger than the gods. The knowledge of *yu* is kept in secrecy in one's own family, kin. The persecution of the healers on the part of the official Christian church and administration facilitated concealment. Now, as it was in the past, it is only possible to own their secrets by means of studying as a pupil.

Several hereditary folk healers of the Mari SSR, such as A. S Mamaeva (b. 1923, Novotoryal region), V. Aslanov (b. 1905, Sernur region), F. M. Mikhailova (b. 1915, Morki region), P. E. Yegorova (b. 1921, Morki region) taught me and trusted some of their family secrets to be published.

Mari folk healers explain that *yu* is the highest power, determining everything, it is the base of life of cosmos. It is stronger than the gods and the spirits, which are only images of *yu*. The saying *yumo dech yu patyr* ('*yu* is stronger than the gods') still exists among the Maris. A general name of sorcerers, healers and foretells is *yuzo*, where *-zo* is a suffix. In human bodies it runs in certain channels called *ilysh korno* ('life road').

The reason of any illness is considered to be the penetration of negative energy into the organism, which may be created by humans, spirits and gods and directed towards the victim. So the energetic imbalance of the organism with cosmos emerges. But to every negative *yu* there is an opposite one.

Diseases evoked by people are subdivided into two groups: *shke cher* ('one's own illness) and *purtymo cher* ('directed by another person). It is believed that a person can direct 5 kinds of negative impersonal energy to another one in order to ruin him, each of them subdivided into 12 groups, and the same goes for gods and spirits. Healers pay much attention to diagnostics in order to determine the proper kind of a harmful energy and in such a way to choose the correct charm, prayer or sacrifice. During treatment the negative energy is taken out at first, then it is either dissolved or is sent to anybody else.

The main ways of guiding *yu* in the process of treatment are meditation, spell, glance, breathing, touch. All of them are correlated with thought. Meditation as a means of owning and using *yu* is highly developed by Mari healers. Its complexity and medical effect is a match to the Tibetan meditation. The essence of the Mari meditation is in the following. A man in his mind at first penetrates into the nature phenomena (for example: sunlight, moon or star light, air, sunrise, lightning, thunder, etc.), reaches the weightlessness and then dissolves. For this purpose special formulas are used. Some healers used to take a hallucinogenic remedy made of fly-agaric for the improvement of their meditation and to induce the state of clairvoyance. It is considered that by means of meditation harmony with cosmos and god is reached and a person is cured. Meditation sitting on the trees and hills was held in high value.

A person, who knows *yu – yuzo* – is thought to be stronger than the gods and the fate. There exists a legend that the knowledge of *yu* comes in one's sleep or in a lethargic state.

The theory of the vital energy was possibly created as a result of interrelations among ancient Uralic peoples, Indo-Europeans and some other Eurasians. The term *yu* may be connected with Indo-European root *yu* (in Sanskrit *ayu* – life).

Similar theories about vital energy and channels in the body have been developed in ancient India and China. In India this theory is about *prana*, in China about *chi*. There we can also find the belief that the knowledge of mysteries of cosmic energy makes a man equal to gods. Not unlike Indians and Chinese, the Mari people paid much attention to guiding the energy in a man's body for medical aims. One of the methods of this guidance together with meditation is acupuncture *ime yu* (*ime* – 'needle'). In this system of acupuncture of the Mari people there are no signs of derivation from the Chinese medicine.

The Khanty also had the idea of an impersonal life-giving Anki-Puyos. An idea of the power *narginen*, which keeps the life on earth, also existed among the Chukchi. The ideas concerning cosmic vital energy are sure to be popular among different peoples from the time immemorial.

Maris believe that independent life of a human being is also possible due to some private kinds of energy, derived from *yu*: *shülysh* ('breath'), *ört* ('mentality', 'consciousness'), *chon* ('soul'). *Shülysh* appears at the moment of fertilisation of the ovum and regulates the development of the human organism up to death, gives warmth, makes the heart beat, blood move, breath. After death *shülysh* is separated from the body in a form of fire and penetrates into *Yumo* ('god', 'universe'). *Chon* appears in the embryo when it is 3 months old. Nothing is known about the origin of *ört* yet.

Other Uralic peoples also had the alike views about human life.

Using the laws of *yu* during the treatment, Mari healers guide not only by the impersonal kinds of energy, but by spirits and gods as well.

Views of the Maris about the connection of gods and spirits with illnesses are the following.

The gods are charged with the task to clean the body and mind of a sick person from the harmful energy, they also can be ordered to transfer the illness to another person. Gods may send diseases in case they are not respected enough or when people commit sins. The smallest gods of separate nature phenomena punish people for disrespectful attitude to the object they represent or rule over. For example, when near the stream someone shouts or dusts it, *vodizh* – the spirit of this stream punish them with skin illnesses. If a man

spits into the fire, he has sore lips, sent by the spirit of fire *tul vodizh*. The main means of curing the diseases from the gods are prayers and sacrifices. But it is thought that *yuzo* wishing not to sacrifice can direct god's anger to another man and transform his illness to him.

The spirits of the illnesses may be banished and even transferred to other persons by the power of thought, meditation, breath, word, touch. As compared with shamanism, Mari healers have no spirits-assistants of their own.

Diseases of people and domestic animals may be caused by the souls of dead people, especially the souls of people died by violent death.

The *vuver*-spirits, having the appearance of a flying fire string or snake, eat the embryo and the child is stillborn or has defects: they often spoil eyes, ears, or skin. Such diseases are called 'vuver eats' (*vuver kochkesh*). *Vuvers* are produced from the souls of dead or alive people, who are practising spoiling – bewitchery to harm people. While alive the soul of such a witch is flying in the sleep, doing harm to people and domestic animals. This man is said to be 'owning the soul of a *vuver*' (*vuver chonam*). After his death the *vuver* creeps out of the grave at night and flies, doing harm. At nights this spirit visits the widow, passes into the room through a chimney, puts on the image of a dead husband and lies with her. Such a widow begins to dry and soon dies.

The spirit called *keremet* earlier was considered to be dangerous enough but at the same time they were savers of the clan among the pagans.

In water a man is sure to meet a 'hairy snake' or 'water hair' (*shar kishke, viid shar*). It is a man's or animal's hair, which in the water becomes alive and penetrates into a man's or animal's body. It is an illness in the form of an outward or inner abscess, causing itch and pains. Just the notion of an alive hair is their explanation of the helminthosis.

A 'tooth worm' (*pü shuksh*) destroys teeth.

Spirits personifying of diseases have a common name *muzho*. The healer's task is to banish them. There are known also such diseases in the shape of spirits as *razim* ('swelling', 'swelling of joints', 'rheumatism'), *viir kemet* ('illness of shoulder-blade joints'), *nerge* ('smallpox'), *yrlykan* ('measles'), *teleza* ('scarlet fever'), *asira* ('dysentery'), *yungo* ('panaris'), *kylmymuzho* ('fever'), *uzhar muzho* ('hepatitis'), *on shirt* ('asthma', 'bronchitis'), *sürem muzho* (spirit causing swoons), *nedik* (among the Hill Maris, a spirit that destroys teeth and ear bones). These spirits have parallels among cognate Uralic, as well as and non-Uralic peoples.