

The function of dance accompaniment causes the use of rhythmical invariants corresponding to ritual dance. From the ethnographic sources referring to 18-19th centuries, we can find that the Mansi used a cornered harp with 10-12 strings - *taryghsyp yiv* ('the wooden crane-neck'). We have information that the Pelym Mansi used two variants of this instrument during the bear-feast. Nowadays only non-ritual melodies are played on the harp.

At the last night of the bear-feast only men stay at home. They sing *yalpyng erygh* ('holy songs') and tell *yalpyng moit* ('holy fairy-tales'). This sacred moment of the feast is inaccessible for women and children. The reason of disappearance of this moment from the ritual is probably explained by this fact.

As we can see, different forms of folk art exist and interact in the frames of this ritual: singing, dancing, instrumental music. These forms made a definite impact on the non-ritual sphere of the Mansi folklore. The results of investigations made by the musicological-ethnographical expeditions in 1987-1990, prove that the specific genre correlation during the bear-feast became the main factor in forming the system of the Mansi folklore genres.

## **FUNERAL KEENS AND THE DYNAMICS OF PSYCHOLOGISM IN FUNERAL RITES**

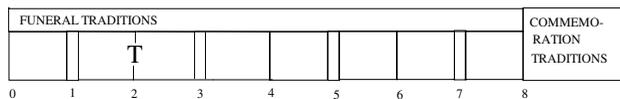
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The funeral rites of many peoples of the world, in the form as they are known today, are complex and multifarious. They comprise a number of various components: ritual operations, keening, religious beliefs, tabooing, etc. This structural complex of the ritual is largely supplemented and interacted by the emotional sphere of psychological states of the human being such as grief, compassion, spiritual pain, the sensation of eternal separation, shock and stupor.

The emotional condition and the state of stress of the participants of a funeral determine very much the psychological dynamics of funeral rites and the degree of psychologism at their key moments. And while the above complex of psychological states of the human being reflects his moral shock, keening that accompanies the funeral rite expresses participants' thoughts and ideas determined by these psychological states and by the visual perception of what

is going on. This very typical verbal-melodical envelope of a funeral rite, which is directly connected with the development of its emotional and psychological orientation, is characterised by several aspects: 1) Aspect of time and space, 2) individual and collective, 3) poetic and ritual.

1. *The aspect of time and space.* The setup of funeral rite contains quite a few major parts which develop in a relatively limited space and have an extension in time. For example, in Slavonic funeral rites one can single out eight successive moments: 1) the death of an individual, including ritual operations during the first posthumous hour; 2) preparations for the burial; washing, clothing and transferring the body to the posthumous bed; 3) the procedures of making a coffin and placing the body in it; 4) visits by neighbours, relatives and members of the family; 5) taking the coffin with the body out of the house; 6) the funeral procession to the cemetery; 7) the burial; 8) funeral repast on the



The decoding of the scheme: 1,2,3... - the distinguished moments of the rite (they are described above), T - taboo on keening, ==, = - moments of emotional upsurge.

day of funeral in the house of the departed.

Keens, accompanying each of the named stages of a funeral rite, have different emotional tinges and gain freest expression: a) right after the death of an individual; b) at the moment of taking the coffin out of the house; c) during the burial and the last parting with the dead, that is at the moments when the effect of visual reception of what is going on generated a state of the greatest spiritual compassion and pain caused by the death. That, in its turn, directly influenced the development of keening and crying in the rite. The circle of sensations and feelings was kind of locking, having reached a definite lessening of tension in the emotional state of the participants of the rite. The development and recurrence of maximum psychological strains in the funeral rite have a kind of amplitude of fluctuations depending on the time and space coordinates of the funeral rite.

If we try to represent graphically the process of a funeral rite proceeding from these coordinates, one more rather interesting detail starts to get clear (see the scheme): the recurrence of maximum psychological states of distress follows a definite rhythm: *emotional upsurge - relaxation - emotional upsurge - relaxation*, etc. The moment of an emotional upsurge is very short, not more than 10-15 min., the moment of relaxation may continue from 1-2 hours to twenty-

four hours (for example, during visits by relatives and neighbours to the home of the deceased).

In the above scheme we have marked with dotted lines the moment of the funeral rite connected with the making of the coffin, taking the coffin into the house and placing the dead body into it. Keening at this stage gained some tension, but its psychological influence on those who were present and the development of the rite as a whole is much weaker than that of the other emotionally distinguished moments. It all seems to be connected with the fact that women keeners at this stage of development of the rite more often describe the coffin as a future and eternal cradle of the dead person and the image of the deceased is given in a parallel way or even somewhere in the background. The following example can illustrate that:

*(Daragi moi hazyain!)*

*Tsi pa tabe ya plotnichkau sabrala?*

*Tvaya zh hatachka novenkaya i nevyasyolenkaya,*

*Yana zh bez vugolchykau, bez akontsau,*

*A u yoi zha duzha tsyomnenka.*

*A yak zha ty tut pryvyknesh?*

*A ty zh tut ne ustanesh*

*I u akontsa ne pasmotrysh ...<sup>1</sup>*

In order to understand the time and space links in a funeral rite, it is necessary to take into account the fact that time and space characteristics of the dynamics of psychologism in the process of the rite are determined by its very development from the beginning to the end. Any intentional change or influence on the historical and chronological boundaries of the rite is hardly possible as it would contradict its traditional scheme. At the same time the most important thing for every individual participant in the rite is his or her presence at the funeral, which determines his or her emotional and stress state.

2. *The individual and collective aspect.* The basis of a funeral rite is the unique dialectics of the individual and collective components. The individual compassions of each separate relative or a member of family in the course of the lengthy ritual operations took the form of collective participation. At the same time the activity of the collective component was kind of pulsating and reaching the highest peak at the emotionally and ritually meaningful moments of the rite. As for the creation of a general emotional state, very often it was women weepers who played the leading role.

The weeper, starting a keen, in the first place expressed her own attitude towards the departed, unburdened her heart and gave vent to pain. At the same time her psychological state sometimes reached the maximum limit of ecstasy which drove others into a similar state. There have been cases when in such situations moaning became collective.

Collective keening is rather a rare phenomenon in folklore when several persons are engaged in moaning for some hours and each narrates her own text without concealing her compassion and grief. Collective keening had such a strong influence in the funeral rite that no other activities could stop or replace them. Sometimes even the singing of a priest was drowned by this frenzied screaming.<sup>2</sup> Folklore specialists can only regret that for some understandable reasons this keening during the rite cannot practically be recorded.

Along with keening nonverbal means (the keepers' facial expressions, their gestures and movements) played a fairly important role in influencing those who were present. The Czechoslovakian folklorist Bozhena Nemcova recorded one of such moments of the funeral rite:

*... when I came to the farmyard, the coffin was already outside. There were a lot of village people around it. The widow and family were near the coffin. The woman was monotonously describing all virtues of the deceased, about her sorrow and loss. Then she suddenly stopped, fell down onto the coffin sadly moaning. A minute later she got up and started keening twisting her arms:*

*Ej gazdičku muoj sladky - ej  
nenazdala som se v utorok,  
zhe ta budem narekati vo čtvrtok - ej  
ej jak rada bych ta opatrovala,  
Bozhiu pomoc pre teba volala - ej, ej ...*

*The word 'ej' was drawn out in such a plaintive and moving way that the others' hearts ached.*<sup>3</sup>

So the individual and collective aspect focuses in itself the ability of keening in a system with nonverbal means to drive a whole group of participants of a funeral rite into a certain psychological state.

3. *The poetical and ritual aspect.* As we know, this or that keen was created right in the course of moaning. Traditional motives known to a weeper have always been supplemented considerably with texts created on the spot. The poetic perfection of any keen depended directly on the weeper's creative abilities. For the sake of comparison we shall provide two examples of the mother's keening over the daughter's death recorded in two different places:

*Voi, dzitsya maye darageye!  
Voi, Bozha zh moi, Bozha!  
Chago zh ty yae tak uzyau zaraneye,  
Bozha moi, maladuyu takuyu?  
A ya zh tsyabe dumala zamuzh addavats,  
A ya zh tsyabe dumala zhanits,  
A ty tak ushla rana z belaga svetu,*

*A dze mne tsyabe shukats?*  
*A dze mne tsyabe strachats?...<sup>4</sup>*  
*Oi, donka maya!*  
*Galubka maya!*  
*Jagadka maya!*  
*Zoratška maya!*  
*Chago zh ty tak rana vybralas at myane?*  
*Ruchki maye zalatyia!*  
*Vochki maye daragiya!*  
*A kali zh ya budu paglyadats na Vas?*  
*A dze zh ya budu ustrachats Vas?...<sup>5</sup>*

As we can see, the texts are very close in their contents, motives, structure, but they differ in their poetic-accumulative merits and possibilities, even though the texts were recorded on one and the same ethnic territory, in similar subjective-objective relations and at the same stage of the funeral rite (in these cases after the ritual of dressing and placing the dead body on the posthumous bed).

To corroborate the accumulative capability of keening, we can give the following example: some pieces of keening, recorded with the help of a tape recorder right during the rite, while reproduced made the same effect on the listener, making him or her cry.

Consequently, a weeper, modifying the poetic techniques she knew, together with nonverbal means (gestures, expressions of faces, movements) was able to create a high collective emotional tension and then to reduce it. All depends on individual abilities to weep and on the poetic perfection of the text and its effect on those who were present. But thematically the text of any keen strictly coincides with the themes of the funeral rite, which makes it possible for us to speak about the poetic and ritual aspect of the psychological dynamics of the funeral rites.

Thus the psychological function of keens in the setup of a ritual is evident. It is no wonder that at the moment of death of an individual as well as at the moment when the departed was being washed and clothed the traditions tabooed any keening. So it may well be that concern for the health of the living forms the basis of the funeral rite: the first emotional upsurge (lament right after the death of an individual) was followed with a pause, which allowed to relax the high emotional state, the state of trance, to realise the inconsolable loss.

On some ancient Slavonic ethnic territories (for example, in Polesye) keening was not allowed until after the transfer of the dead body onto the posthumous bed (*na kut, na lavu*, as the local people say).

Speaking about the aspect of time and space, we have already noted a certain rhythm and pattern of recurrence of psychological peaks throughout

the whole of the funeral rite, which means that an emotional upsurge was always followed by a relaxation. This proves once more that the funeral rite is a complex system of various states, meditations and instructions aimed at self-preserving, including some elements of ancient magic, the objective of which is to preserve and defend the human being.

The aspect of time and space, the individual and collective aspect and the poetic and ritual aspect characterising the relationship and the interdependence of keens and the dynamics of psychologism in the funeral rites are of major significance, but they do not exhaust the whole volume of the problem under consideration. Here of great importance are such phenomena as the functional orientation and the emotional psychic expressiveness of an individual participant that are determined by a concrete development causing sorrowful feelings; ties of blood; local traditional requirements and some other factors, being important preconditions of a pattern of relations between keen-ing and the psychologism of the funeral rite.

### Literature

<sup>1</sup>*Pahavanni. Paminki. Galashenni.* Minsk, 1986, p. 437.

<sup>2</sup>Trotsky, A. Uklad. In: *Litovskie Eparhialnye vedomosti.* 1875, No. 11, p. 96.

<sup>3</sup>Nemcova, B. *Obrazy ze zhivota slovenskeho.* In: *Časopis Musea Kralovstvi Českeho.* r 33. sv 4. 1859, p. 508.

<sup>4</sup>The Record Office of the Institute of Art, Ethnography and Folklore of Byelorussia, fund 4, record 89, file 243, notebook 1, page 36. Recorded by V. Sysov in the village of Yasenets, Mosyr region of the Gomel district in 1989, contributed by G. Kutko, born in 1924.

<sup>5</sup>Op cit., p. 61. Contributed by S. Tkach, born in 1928.

## **ABOUT THE LIFE AND WORK OF AN ECCENTRIC**

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The ranks of the most outstanding Estonian folklorists, reaching from J. Hurt to M. J. Eisen, to O. Kallas and W. Anderson, are today finished with Oskar Loorits, Academician of the Estonian Academy of Sciences during the period