

came to see their living relatives. Therefore the minstrel-beggars had supernatural qualities: their blessings were believed to be effective and their curse was dangerous. But in a course of time these customs lost their magical functions and they have become a form of amusement of young people and children. Several researchers like Kristi Salve and Ülo Tedre have stressed the Balto-Finnic, pagan origin of Estonian Martinmas customs and this is also confirmed by the motif discussed above. But naturally there are also later, medieval and modern layers. The song motif about the journey of the minstrel-beggars is based on an idea of the difficult journey to the realm of death, to Toonela, with all its obstacles. It is a rare case in Estonian folk religion where myth and custom are clearly connected and a mythological text is performed in ritual notions.

TRADITIONAL UNDERSTANDING OF THE IDEAL ORGANISATION OF THE WORLD IN THE UDMURT RELIGIOUS-MYTHOLOGICAL SYSTEM

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It is so typical of a man to dream about future. It is quite natural that the more complicated the world used to be the more various and richer were the views of a man on the future world organisation. Spontaneous views, dreams about the ideal organisation of reality gradually became integral structures, systems widely spread all over the world as social Utopias. The scholars concentrated their attention on the study of the Utopian systems created by philosophers, sociologists, economists. But unfortunately they were very little interested in the history of the Utopian ideas, which spontaneously had appeared among the people.

Unfortunately it should also be said that such an important and perspective sphere of research based on Udmurt data has not yet been analysed.

The most representative sources concerning social-Utopian views of the Udmurts are their pagan incantations-*kuris'kons*. The texts of the *kuris'kons* were published by B. Munkácsi (1887), Y. Wichmann (1893), G. Vereshchagin (1886, 1889), N. Pervukhin (1888-1889), I. Vasilyev (1906)¹ etc. Though the Udmurt

kuris'kons have long been known, they have never been studied specially. There are only several individual publications where poetic,² musical, linguistic aspects³ of incantation texts of the Udmurts are presented. In this particular case we shall try to analyse the Udmurt *kuris'kons* in the context of people's views on the ideal organisation of life. They allow to get an exhaustive information characterising the ideals of the people.

Let us apply to one of the most typical to our thinking *kuris'kon* texts written down by B. Munkácsi in 1886 in the village Shaktapy, Malmizhsky district. To make the analysis of the text more vivid, we shall give it in its full content.

Oste, Inmar, Vorshud, the great Mudor, Kiltchin-Inmar!

We revere you with full cups and new loaves of bread. Let the best part be for you, the rest be the duties-assessment for the great tsar. Let the great tsar live in peace and well, and not be angry with us. Let my goods be enough for to pay my duties. Let the rye sowed by me grow as your strawberries; let the roots be 30, stems 12, grains 1 000 on a cane thatch with a silver ear of rye! Let this field be not galloped round by a squirrel, be run over by a fox, be rushed by a marten.

Bring warm rains, southern winds, give kind years. Save us from night disaster, iron, brass and silver swords, save us from the clouds as bloody as red berries.

When we bring sheaves to the threshing-floor, let them be enough to make a stack on 12 rests. Let the barn from top to the bottom be so full with the sheaves that the stack become flat under their weight, and no more sheaves could be put to the top.

When we beat with flails, let the grains be so plentiful that they could fill the granary so that one could not make a movement there.

When I go hunting, bring my dog to the game, so that the dog will seize it with the paws and teeth. As quickly as a river flows, bring the animals with fluffy tails right to that place in the thicket where my traps are set.

Give me well-being, so that from the sunrise to the sunset he who can hear could hear and he who can see could see our good reputation.

Let my household be full of brisk children, that they could scurry and flutter like swallows before rain.

Let me marry my 7 daughters to the young men living on the opposite side of the river and take 9 daughters-in-law to this side of the river.

Let me live all my life with that wife who was the first I had seen,

let me live with my first-born children to the day of my death.

Oste, Inmar! Let a foal be with a horse, let it become a good horse with a white star on its forehead.

Let a calf be with a cow, let it grow up and give enough milk and butter. Let lambs be with a sheep. Let them grow up and give silky wool.

Let hens and chickens be as many as bars in the fence. Let water be covered with geese and ducks like leaves and flowers.

I do not know what else I can ask you to do, more than that I have asked. Think about it yourself, take care of everything, my great Inmar.⁴

The texts of *kuris'kons* witness to the development and antiquity of this Udmurt tradition, the appearance of special images, symbols, word combinations, the majority of which have become so archaic in their structure that they hardly can be translated into the modern Udmurt language, and the meaning of some of the most important words and word combinations cannot be understood adequately because it has long been lost; but still they are preserved - the stability and inviolability of the text are very important, without them the prayer was considered ineffective, incomplete and the integrity of the text was to influence the integrity of 'the ideal world', about which the sacred narration was. If the text was violated, the key words were missed or substituted, the form of the prayer was changed, an apologetic formula was worked out. As it has been mentioned, an Udmurt *kuris'kon* has a canonical structure: 1) the address to the whole hierarchy of the deities influencing the man, his social and natural environment; 2) the incantation proper, including all requests to the deities; 3) an apologetic address to the deities with the hope that they will make the wishes true. Here we observe a circular structure 'gods - incantation - gods'. Obviously it is chosen intentionally. A repeated address to the deities was to enhance the effectiveness of the incantation, besides that the return to the divine beginning at the end of the prayer makes it a particular sacred circle, stable and even invulnerable from the point of view of the formula. The three-layer composition of an Udmurt *kuris'kon* corresponds to the trichotomy model of the world where the top layers are for deities, and the middle layer is for the people. It is in the middle layer where the numerous troubles, wishes and hopes of the people are addressed to the upper and lower gods.

The Udmurt incantation texts are full of images and symbols, they have an artistic form, they are epically emotional, rhythmically and sometimes melodically arranged (rye fields with a cane thatch, silver ears of rye with gold grains, widely used magic of figures: 30 roots, 12 stems, 1 000 grains, an iron, brass, silver fence defending from disaster, bloody, like red berries, clouds, 'fluffy

tails' - game that is to be caught by a trap, the way the boats are carried by the flow of the river, a flying and creeping bad word; here are effectively used alliteration, expressive duplicates like *kildis'-vordis* ('creator-keeper'), *shud-bur* ('happiness-health', 'happiness-satisfaction'), *ulo-vilo* ('life'), *ushjamo-veramo* ('to say - to boast'), *shuit-ebit* ('warm-soft'), *kilis'-imis'* ('unanimously'), *berlo-vall'o* ('later-earlier'), *shudisa-s'erekjasa* ('playing-laughing'), *uzhani-L'ukani* ('to work - to gather'), *sarn'i-azves'* ('gold-silver'), etc., i.e. the information of the ideal organisation of the world was realised and wrapped into the most ideal forms or, as we would prefer to say it now, here the unity of the form and content is observed. The achievement of the ideal demanded perfect means. All this should be so beautiful, so perfect, that the deities would like it and would not refuse it, all this was to produce a strong psychological influence upon both the man pronouncing the incantation and the listeners.

Besides, it contributed to the digesting and keeping in mind the sacred text and its full transmission to other generations. A word was given a sacred meaning. The speech-incantation itself was like an act of magic creation, the achievement of the desirable.

The priest (*kuris'kis'*) pronouncing incantations, though following the canon, amply used his abilities of improvisation, which undoubtedly made the perception of the incantation more effective because everything happening was perceived as creative activity and the priest considered himself a creator, the creator of ideal future for people on behalf of whom he addressed the gods.

Speaking of a special semantic status of the texts of Udmurt *kuris'kons* in the context of traditional understanding of the ideal world organisation, it is necessary to stress their concentrated mythology. Mythological pictures sometimes are presented in the form of a figurative formula.

Incantations-*kuris'kons* contain a very rich information of the Udmurts' understanding of the ideal world organisation on its most important structural layers 'man - society - nature'. This information is of a wide typological scope from a definite detail to a wide symbol-generalisation. Here practically everything is written, everything that to the people's thinking makes the essential point of the ideal organisation of the world.

It is interesting to dwell on the question about the priorities in this information about the ideal. What is the most essential in this system of views from the point of view of the man addressing the deities with his incantations. It turns out to be bread. It is bread that is considered to be the basis of life, hence such high symbols as bread-butter, bread-salt; the oath by bread. And it is not an Udmurt peculiarity, it is a characteristic trait of a peasant's thinking in general. In a mythological context bread is not just the main and the most traditional food of the peasants, but everything that is connected with it as a symbol of

life, that makes the sense of the life of a peasant. Besides bread, there is the cattle a peasant is to take care of. And it is not occasional that it plays an important role in the system of views on the ideal life. Agriculture and a normal functioning of a peasant's household are practically impossible in the conditions of Prikamyje without cattle-breeding.

Numerous sacrifices were considered the most important means to achieve the ideal organisation of life, a certain guarantor to get the deities' favour, that is why animals for sacrifice are specially presented in the prayer texts, they certainly possess magic traits: these are bulls with silver teeth, golden hooves and wool, rams with golden horns, silver wool - they were to become a desired gift for the gods, who, to people's thinking, were obligatory to give them their gifts in return and generously to make their life happy, with gold, silver and other treasures. The magic sacrifice returned to them thousand times more and provided them with a new miracle - rich and happy life.

The Udmurts are forest people, they could not imagine their life without hunting. In it they found joy and repose. They used to say 'an Udmurt is happy in the forest'. Though hunting no longer played the main role and just helped to support the household, nevertheless according to an ancient tradition an Udmurt peasant never forgets in his incantations about this very important sphere of his life. That is why agricultural plots are made with the help of 'woody', 'hunting' means the rye should grow wild like verdure of a willow or birch tree, and as for the rye field, they wish it to be so big that a squirrel could not gallop it round, a fox could not run it all over, a marten could not rush by. Without hunting an Udmurt peasant cannot imagine neither his present nor his future.

As for other traditional occupations of the Udmurts, bee keeping and fishing in particular, they are very rarely presented in the incantations.

In one of the incantations there is the following phrase: *Oh, Lord of the bees, Kuaz' be healthy*, i.e. if Kuaz' is healthy, the bees will be healthy too.

For example a prayer of a fisherman:

*Oh, my Cheptsja-Mother, don't be angry with me. I came to fish. My Vumurt, I give you a crust of bread: give me your biggest fish! Bring the fish, swimming far, closer to the bank of the river. When we make a fishery once or twice, fill it with fish, oh, our Vumurt, Cheptsja-Mother. Don't tear our nets and drag-nets, my Vumurt.*⁵

Such insignificance of these spheres of life is explained in all probability by the fact that agriculture and cattle-breeding were the main occupation in the people's life. All the rest was born in mind and taken as it was. The main thing was to ask the gods for that which was necessary and without which it was impossible to exist. All the rest would be managed somehow.

Alongside the ideal economic activity, the Udmurt *kuris'kons* present in detail a wide range of social relations from gifts to the Tsar's treasury to family relations. And all this is given not so much in a real, as in a desired way, as it should be in the incantations.

The relations at the top level (or outside the peasant level) are mainly the relations with the authorities. In *kuris'kons* their symbolical embodiment is Bydzym Eksey - The Great Tsar. These relations were one-sided and monotonous: the peasants were to pay their gifts on a full scale and in time. That was all there was to it. It was hard for a peasant to carry such a burden, that is why he always remembered about it. A peasant was so patient that in his requests addressed to the deities he agreed to give 1/3 or even half of his money to the unknown Tsar 'joyfully and willingly', without objections and arguments. In the system of social values the Udmurts paid attention to their relations with their relatives, neighbours, country-men and kind people in general. They determined social well-being, atmosphere of life, success or failure in economic or other deeds. The Udmurts attached much value to their reputation among the relatives, the country-men, the people of the same tribe. It meant a lot what people say, 'what they said', 'what they will think'. Public opinion was the highest instance, its verdict could not be borne by all the people, it could even cause death. That is why people tried so much to save themselves from a creeping and flying word, from the 'evil word' and the 'evil eye', from 'curses-misfortunes' - to achieve it meant to be happy. To get in their social environment the title *joskad' ad'ami* ('a real man') and then 'let him who can hear hear about me in all the countries from the sunrise to the sunset, let him who can see notice me'. Creating the image of the ideal society, the Udmurt peasants could not imagine it without an ideal family - the main social institution. With the help of image-symbolical means there is created a very expressive picture of a family life: the choice of the wife, the staff of the family, the number of the children, the relations of the members of the family, their characterisation, etc. Addressing his deity an Udmurt said:

Let me all my life live with that wife whom I have first seen, let me live to my dying day with my first-born children... Let my granted daughters and sons live successfully like twittering swallow's nestlings.

A very important and probably an eternal aspect of social and family harmony in particular is the problem of the relations between the generations. The relations between fathers and their sons, the old and the young characterise well special rites - sacrifices dedicated to the parents (*jyr-pyd sötön*), as well as an annual sacrifice of a duck which was carried out in honour of the ancestors, in order to be sure of their help.

So, the analysis of the Udmurt prayer texts - *kuris'kons* proves that the ideal life⁶ they imagine exists under kind sun, warm nights and is washed by

abundant rains, is blown around by sweet winds, and all misfortunes pass it by. Well-cultivated peasants' fields are full of the ears of rye, rich harvest overfills the barns. Milk-butter cows pasture on the picturesque meadows. Pacers with a star on the forehead swiftly gallop, competing in speed with fast young mares, the cattle and poultry with numerous breeding are a pleasure to the eye and heart. The Mother Cheptsä and the Pisep and other rivers bring life-giving moisture to the crops and herbs, save forests and villages from disastrous fires. There are huge numbers of fur animals and wild fowl in the thick of the forest. And all this wealth is enough to pay gifts to the treasury, to feed oneself, to have a fairly well-to-do existence, and to treat numerous relatives, neighbours, and all kind people, to lay the table with, and to have something in store. In the house there lives a big friendly family, kind parents with hard-working children respecting them, love and concord reigns in the family. They are famous for it all over the world. This happy world is guarded by the gods, deities, ancestors. And the best part of everything possessed is dedicated to them in gratitude, miraculous animals with golden horns, silver hooves, golden wool are sacrificed to them. This is a schematically generalised picture of the Udmurts' ideal peasant life. Dreaming about the ideal world, a peasant does not have any illusions, any vain dreams, his views are properly concrete, and can really be realised. In his dreams he created his own understanding of the ideal organisation of the world thriftily and stingily. In such a world there existed only necessary and functional things: the God - authorities - nature/weather - bread - hunting - luck - cattle - wealth - family - health - happiness - good reputation - deities. There is nothing superfluous and even much of what could be useful is absent. But a peasant does not ask for it not only because he is afraid to be tiresome for the gods with his requests, but mainly because he got used to be satisfied with what he had and to rely in his life only upon himself (even if life is understood as an ideal one). As it turns out a man does not want much.

What a peasant really asks his gods for is that his labour be fruitful, that the nature be generous and favourable to him, and the people be kind to him. And as for all other things he'll manage to cope with them himself. He is eager to build this ideal, to his view, world with his own hands, and not somewhere very far, in the unknown lands, not in the heaven, but here on his native land right in his household. It is this household that is the main particle of the ideal model of the peasant social-Utopian views.

Taking into consideration an age-old experience and with the help of his practical mind, an Udmurt peasant has long counted and realised everything and even tried to persuade his deities that the best way of management on this sinful earth is a peasant household in its general sense as an embodiment of well-being, its stability, and functional reliability. It is not occasional that all his

ideal life presented in the incantations takes place in his household and within it, that is why an Udmurt peasant nearly always worships his tribal fathers' household *gid-kuā*. For him the territory of the yard of houses - *azbar*, the size of which is 30 *sagene*, which is never covered with hoarfrost, never overgrown with weed, is of special mythological meaning. It is his ideal world, here is his pagan paradise. But an individual peasant household or all of them could not provide a well-to-do existence. Traditional views of a peasant are idealistic and even Utopian, and that is why they were open to criticism. In a real, far from being ideal, world the Udmurts very often, if not constantly, suffered from natural and destructive social disasters, suffered and even died from whip, from iron chains-shackles. No *kuris'kon* could save them from all this. And what is more, the fate prepared so great suffering to Udmurt peasants (as well as to all long-suffering peasants of Russia) that they seemed to have forgotten all beautiful, eternal and heart and mind-warming words of their prayers-*kuris'kons*, where the ideal life was so expressively pictured.

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