

THE RITUAL AND MUSICAL CONTEXT OF EXISTENCE

This collection presents a detailed description of the musical component of ritual melodies and emphasises the importance of understanding the ritual context in order to fully appreciate the significance of the song material. Comprehensive ethnographic information on the subject can be found in a number of scientific publications, including works by Wichmann (1894), Komov (1889), Yakovlev (1903), Hristolyubova, Minniyakhmetova and Timirzyanova (1989), Hristolyubova, Minniyakhmetova (1994), Chernykh (1995, 2002, 2008a, 2008b), Minniyakhmetova (2000, 2001, 2003), Vladykina and Glukhova (2011), Nazmutdinova (2017), Sadikov (2017, 2019), Atamanov-Egrapi (2020), Anisimov (2022), and book ‘Travels to the Udmurts and Mari’ (2014).

Calendar Rituals

In the traditional calendar of the Eastern Udmurt, Shrovetide *Vey* is an important ritual that marks the transition from winter to spring. In the past, this holiday lasted for a week and involved cooking and eating *taban*⁷, family prayers, hosting guests, mumming, joking, playing games, having fun, riding sleds, and spinning wheels. In the village of Bolshekachakovo in Kaltasy district, there is a hill that is named after this holiday – *Veygurez* (lit. Shrovetide Hill). Local Udmurts would ride horses on this hill during the Shrovetide celebrations. A pair of horses would be harnessed and decorated with towels and ribbons, and bells would be tied to their harnesses. It is not customary to sleep for a long period on this day. “If you sleep for an extended period on this day, you will become lazy for the entire year” (Minniakhmetova, Sadikov, 2005, p. 52). Young men would visit homes in the early morning, and if anyone was found sleeping, they would be taken outside and thrown into the snow. This was particularly true for young unmarried women and older men. Guests from other villages would also come on this holiday. They would be treated, hosted, entertained, and escorted back to their village with songs and an accordion or hookah on the third day (Minniakhmetova, Sadikov, 2005, pp. 52–53). The stay in some villages would include the performance of the Shrovetide song *Vey kui* (in the villages of Vyazovka and Sary Kyzyl-Yar in Tatyshly district). According to Tatiana Minniyakhmetova, it was possible to start singing *djumshan kui* (the melody of festivities) from Shrovetide, but it was forbidden to perform this tune during the following holiday, *bydjynnal* (the Great Day) (Minniakhmetova, 2000, pp. 84–85).

Previously, during Shrovetide, there was a custom of walking a mummer in the form of a bear through the village. One or more participants would wear a fur coat turned inside out, and, after being tied with a rope or chain, a group of men and young people would walk around the house with the participant. The hosts would generously treat the participants in the procession. At the same time, there was an event called *gondyr ektyton* (the custom of forcing a bear to dance) where *gondyr ektyton takmaks* were performed. These *takmaks* contained figurative erotic motifs. Participants in the event formed a large circle. A ‘bear’ was brought to the centre and the participants began to clap their hands in time with the music. With this musical accompaniment, the ‘bear’ began to perform a dance waving its arms, spinning, leaping, and attacking the surrounding participants, grabbing at their intimate areas (Uvarov, 1979, pp. 10–11; Minniyakhmetova, 2000, p. 85; Atamanov-Egrapi, 2020, pp. 160–161; FM, 2022). These actions reflect the remnants of an ancient cult of the bear as an ancestor, who appears at a significant point in the calendar cycle and symbolises the bestowing of blessings, and most importantly, sexual energy as a source of fertility for both humans and nature. The texts of the songs sung while the ‘bear’ or ‘bears’ danced, of a chastushka-type called *takmak*, correspond with the meaning of the ritual actions and are filled with themes of sex and eroticism.

One of the most significant festivals in the traditional calendar of the Eastern Udmurts is *bydjynnal* (the Great Day), which has various regional variations of the name and is now aligned with the date of Orthodox Easter. This festival includes a complex of interconnected rituals that mark the start of the year in accordance with the ethnic calendar:

- *eru karon* (lit. making noise⁸) / *ur ves* (lit. noisy prayer) / *jin-periosyz ullyan* (exorcism of evil spirits) / *verva kistyk* / *vervachyk* / *verbachyk* / *verba* / *verva kistyr* / *berba kistyr* / *vervastyk* / *puchi ner* (willow kistyr / willow branch) / *byddjynnal bashlan* (the beginning of the Great Day);
- *kulon poton djyt* / *kulon poton* / *kulysh ui* (night of the dead);
- *bydjynnal djyt* (the eve of the Great Day);
- *bydjynnal* / *Budjynnal* (the Great day);
- *tulys djumshan* (spring feast), *oshorog* / *oshorok* / *pertmaskon* (spring mummary);
- *bydjynnal kelyan* (seeing off the Great Day) (Minniakhmetova, 2000, p. 22; Minniyakhmetova, 2003, pp. 83–152; FM, 2016–2023).

⁷ *Taban* is a type of tortilla made from sour yeast dough.

⁸ According to the assumption of linguist Sergei Maksimov, ‘eru’ can be associated with the Tatar ‘aru’ in the meaning of ‘clean, healthy’ (oral message 2024). *Arulanu*, Chapter 1: Improve, become tolerable. 2. Be cleansed, be refreshed. 3. Recover, get better (Tatar-Russian).

In our collection of recordings, we have included tunes dedicated to the three rituals of the spring season:

- **Willow Purification Ceremony:** *verva kis(y)tyr* (Novye Tatyshly village, Tatyshly district) / *ver(y)ba kistyr* (Petropavlovka village, Tatyshly district) / *ver(y)va kistyk* (Stary Kyzyl-Yar village, Tatyshly district) / *verbastyk*, *vervachyk* (Stary Varyash village, Yanaul district) / *budjynnal bashlan kui* (Starokalmiyarovo village, Tatyshly district) / *vervachyk* (Andreevka village, Yanaul district) / and *verva kistyk* (Asavka village, Baltachevo district) / *verba kui* (Aribashevo village, Tatyshly district).
- **The Great Day:** *bydjynnal* / *bydjynnal gui* / *valen gjumshan* ([chant] of the Great Day / chants of the Great Day / [chants] of festivities on horseback) (Shudek village, Yanaul district) / *budjynnal kui* (chants of the Great Day) (Vyazovka village, Tatyshly district) / *budjynnal kui* (chant of the Great day) (Vernebaltachevo and Stary Kizyl-Yar villages, Tatyshly district).
- **Spring mummerly:** *oshorok kui* / *oshorok takmak* (chant of the *oshorok* ritual / ditties performed during the *oshorok* ritual) (Vyazovka village, Tatyshly district) / *oshorok takmakyos* (ditties performed during the *oshorok* ritual) (Stary Kyzyl-Yar and Aribashevo villages, Tatyshly district, Stary Varyash village, Yanaul district).

The rite of purification with the willow, held in *verva kistyr* / *verba kistyr* / *verva kistyk* / *berba kistyr* / *verbastyk*, *vervachyk* / *puchi ner* / and *badjynnal bashlan*, is a traditional ceremony that takes place on Sunday a week before *bydjynnal*, the Orthodox Easter celebration. This ritual, known by different names in different regions, serves to cleanse the village, houses, and people of ‘evil spirits’ and disease. The main focus of the ceremony is on the willow, which is seen as a powerful symbol of cleansing and protection. Young willow branches, ranging from one to two metres in length, are used to create a kind of whip. These branches are gathered in odd numbers, such as three, five, or seven, and are carefully chosen for their strength and flexibility. During the ceremony, the willow is used to whip the air and create noise, symbolising the expulsion of negative energy and the beginning of a new, clean chapter. The willow branches also serve as a reminder of the importance of unity and cooperation in the community, as they are woven together to form a single symbol of strength. Subsequently, the woven whip serves as a magical tool to expel diseases and evil spirits, stimulate fertility, and bring about rebirth in a new status. It is used to whip out household buildings, livestock, and the residents of a house. The process of cleansing begins from the upper part of the street and moves towards the lower part, where these branches are later removed.

A key part of the entire process is the performance of a ritual chant that involves making noise, shouting good wishes, and reciting spells. This chant, performed during the ceremony, acts as a talisman and also serves as one of the methods for influencing evil spirits. The chant was performed while quilting both people and livestock, as well as during walks down the street and visits to houses. Information about this tradition and its chant can be found in several districts of Bashkortostan, including Baltachevo, Yanaul and Tatyshly. Additionally, information about its existence in other areas, such as the Buraevo and Kaltasy districts of Bashkiria, and Kueda district in the Perm region, can be found in scientific literature (Chernykh, 2002, p. 48; Minniyakhmetova, 2003, pp. 93–99).

The terminology of the chants directly refers to the main ritual object (the willow) and the action performed with it (whipping). The second part of the chant name contains an onomatopoeic reference to the sound of bare branches whistling, produced during blows or when waving the willow during the procession around the courtyards. Vladimir Napolskikh sees Tatar (Kryashen) influence in the term and, following Bernát Munkácsi (Munkácsi, 1896, pp. 171, 173), interprets it as the “willow branches that are used to expel Shaitan on Palm Sunday” (Napolskikh, 2019, p. 145). Munkácsi emphasises the similarity of the second part of the compound to **kistir* and notes its similarity with the Chuvash word *χister*. On this basis, he reconstructs the original form as **verba χister*, meaning ‘willow’, ‘whip’, ‘expel’. In only one case does the name of the tune reflect its temporal significance, as the ceremonial week begins on that day – *budjynnal bashlan kui* (chant of the beginning of the week of the Great Day).

The willow stands out in the text as a symbol of purity, new life, and rebirth through whipping. This is indicated by the peculiarity of the day, ‘*Aris lyktem ar(y) nunal*’, which means ‘the day that comes once a year’. This phrase refers to the beginning of the most important holiday, ‘*Puchy lyktoz, puchy koshkoz / Budjynnal kylyoz vozmany*’, which means ‘the willow will come and go, we have to wait for the Great Day’ (Petropavlovka village). Apotropaic and stimulating spells are also spoken: ‘*Vervachyk, vervachyk! Zhinde kushty, ubyrye kushty! Mury en kyly*’, which means ‘the willow is whipping! Cast away the bad, cast away the evil! Don’t stay barren!’ (Andreevka village). These phrases are used to ward off negative energy and bring good fortune.

Musically, the melodies follow a similar pattern: a one-line melody that corresponds to two lines of poetic text, an equi syllabic rhythm in eight-time (8+7) ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ | ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ |, and a scale based on a tibial trichord of c-d-e, which expands to a tetrachord of c-d-e-g in a fifth. The melody follows an ascending–descending pattern along the scale steps (Nos. 1, 35, 71, 83, 84, 101, 156 and 157). At present, this tradition is on the verge of being forgotten, but thanks to the efforts of active folklorist Garayeva Liliya Zidiyarovna, who was born in 1953, it has recently been revived in the village of Aribashevo.

The Great Day, *bydjynnal*, is a central spring holiday for the entire community. On this day, families prepare traditional dishes, hold prayers, visit relatives and friends, and children play games with eggs. However, the performance of rituals by villagers during this time is becoming less common due to the decline of the tradition. This exception is made by some villages that have active folklore groups that help preserve ritual melodies and ensure they remain an integral part of the community’s life (for example, Vyazovka, Stary Kyzyl-Yar and Tanypovka villages in Tatyshly district).

During the guest sessions, a special chant called ‘*bydjynnal kui / gui*’ is always sung. This tune is recorded in smaller numbers, and field studies have revealed its heterogeneous existence, as it is not found in all Eastern Udmurt villages. In some villages, it has already been forgotten and lost. We have recordings from two districts, Tatyshly (Verkhnebal-tachevo, Stary Kyzyl-Yar and Vyazovka villages) and Yanaul (Shudek and Konigovo villages), at our disposal. According to popular belief, this chant could only be performed during this holiday, it was considered taboo at other times.

The lyrics of the chant describe the arrival of a special day in the year. They include incantations and spells:

*Milemyz no veras, ai, murtjos, shol,
Chiskyloklen pasyaz med uschoz.*

People who are slandering us,
Let them fall into the hole of the latrine⁹.
(Verhnebaltachevo village, Tatyshly district)

A common image that is often associated with the coming of spring, life, and new beginnings is the image of a goose. Tatiana Vladykina, in her work on Udmurt mythology, notes that the goose is an ‘ornithomorphic symbol’ that connects not only different places and generations, but also different times, such as the ‘incoming’ and ‘outgoing’ seasons and the ‘arrival’ and ‘departure’ of events (Vladykina, 2018, p. 120):

*Ai vu viyaloz, vu viyaloz,
Vu kuzya no djajeg uyaloz.
Vu kuzya djajeg uyan dyrya,
Kyk sinmystym vued viyaloz.*

The river will flow, the river will flow,
The goose will swim along the river.
When the goose swims down the river,
Tears will flow from both my eyes.
(Shudek village, Yanaul district)

The verses of the poem are longer and consist of different syllabic patterns (9+9, 9+10, 9+11, 10+9, 10+10, 10+11 and 11+10). The rhythmic structure of the text is dominated by sequences with equal numbers of syllables, sometimes combined with the iambic form. The melodies of the poems are based on a scale consisting of different notes: c-d-e-g-a (Shudek village, Yanaul district, Stary Kyzyl-Yar, Tatyshly district), c-d-e-g-a-c¹ (Verkhnebaltachevo village, Tatyshly district) or c-d-f-g-a-c¹ (Vyazovka village, Tatyshly district).

Melodically, there are several types of melody (Nos. 102, 168–170), some of which are the same and some are different in terms of their melodic content, but they all have a similar initial intonation (Nos. 40 and 46). These *bydjynnal kui / gui* melodies are characterised by a large number of melismatic embellishments.

The question arises: what was the reason behind the use of ornamental techniques in the archaic songs of this local diaspora? On one hand, it could be attributed to the influence of Turkic musical culture. On the other hand, it seems that the significance of this particular tune in the Eastern Udmurt tradition has been revealed, as it is believed that skilled performance is associated with singing melismatic ornaments – the more of these ornaments, the more skilled the performer. Today, it is rare to find such songwriters as well as this particular tune. As an example, Shoshmin local tradition among the Udmurts in Baltasi district in the Republic of Tatarstan can be mentioned. Irina Nurieva explains this by stating that “certain elements of Turkic songwriting organically entered and became integrated into the archaic Udmurt song style” (Nurieva, 2004, p. 9).

Spring mummary *tulys djumshan / oshorok / oshorog / oshorog djuon*. In the days following the Great Day, or locally on the same day, the hospitality continued with a treat of homemade beer and other alcoholic beverages to celebrate *tulys djumshan* (spring feast) / *oshorok / oshorog / oshorog djuon* (a de-etymologised term). Vladimir Napol'skikh uses the name of the rite for those borrowed by southern Permians from the Alan tradition at the end of the Proto-Permian time: Alan. **oša-rānga* ‘women’s mead’ (Napol'skikh, 2015, pp. 528–529).

Previously, this celebration was accompanied by a performance of mummary. Elderly women would wear fur coats inside out, smear their faces with soot and red beetroot, and change their voices to be unrecognised. They would behave defiantly and obscenely. Carrots and beets were an indispensable part of their outfit, symbolising masculinity. During the ritual procession through the village, the mummers would perform *oshorok takmakyos*, ditties related to the oshorok ritual. These ditties often included erotic motifs and images as the primary components. Tatiana Minniyakhmetova and Ranus Sadikov noted that during the house tours, the mummers also performed *djumshan kui*, a melody associated with the festivities. They began performing this melody from Shrovetide (*Vey*) and continued until the *oshorok* festivities (Minniakhmetova, Sadikov, 2005, p. 56).

⁹ This text is a verbal charm in the form of a spell with a wish that the enemies who are working hard in vain will go to an unsuitable place.

The verbal, song, and action codes of this ritual, with emphasis on its sexual or erotic character, are intended to perform sacred functions. In calendar rituals, they typically help the earth and nature wake up, aid in the birth of a new crop, and so on. Currently, the *oshorok* ritual is perceived by those who practice the tradition as an ‘embarrassing entertainment’, causing confusion, laughter, and fun among participants, as the meaning of the ritual as a way to stimulate natural and human fertility has been lost (Vladykina, 2018, p. 191). Probably, this fact influenced the preservation of these texts in the memory of only the older generation, which admittedly was very difficult to record¹⁰.

Five recorded samples of *oshorok takmak* from different locations (Aribashevo, Vyazovka and Stary Kyzyl-Yar villages, Tatyshly district and Stary Varyash village, Yanaul district) (Nos. 36, 47, 85, 103, 158), have different dancing rhythms. The melodies have three sound orders, c-g-a-c¹; c-d-e-g-a-c¹; c-d-f-g-a-c¹. However, they all have the same rhythmic structure, which is based on an octave of 8+7 notes, similar to the rhythms used in melodies accompanying the purification ceremonies that use willow.

Among them, the *oshorok kui* chant from the *oshorok* rite in Vyazovka village, Tatyshly district (No. 48) stands out. Firstly, the term ‘*kui*’ attracts attention, unlike ‘*takmak*’, which focuses on the melodic component. The tempo of the performance is unhurried, and the melody is significantly lyrical, which may be facilitated by instrumental accompaniment on the accordion. There is a lot of melismatic singing in the melody. Another distinctive feature is the rhythmic aspect of the chant, which combines equal-syllabic and iambic formulas (as in the chants of *bydjynnal kui* / *gui*, i.e. the Great Day), in addition to which the verse is longer (10+10).

Family and Ancestral Traditions

The wedding of the Eastern Udmurt, *syuan*, is represented by a complex of rituals and traditions. It consists of several stages and has its own local features:

- Stealing the bride, *vilkenak nushkan* / *lushkan*;
- Bathing ceremony of the bride, *vilkenak pylaton*;
- Negotiation, *jyrdon kelshon* / *ajischkyny mynon*;
- Wedding feast at the bride’s house, *nyl doryn syuan* / *nyl syuan*;
- Wedding feast at the groom’s house *pi doryn syuan* / *pi syuan* (Hristolyubova, Minniakhmetova, Timirzyanova, 1989; FM, 2023).

The performance of songs during the wedding ceremony plays an important communicative role. It is a symbolic language of communication that fills the transitional ritual with allegories and images. In the past, skilled musicians known as *vaskali kyrdjas* were invited to weddings to perform wedding songs (Bolshekachakovo village, Kaltasy district) (FM, 2022).

Today, throughout the wedding ceremony, appropriate chants and songs are sung. They begin from the moment when the groom’s parents present gifts and express their intentions and purpose through song (Hristolyubova, Minniakhmetova, Timirzyanova, 1989, pp. 89–90). The relatives of the bride greet the groom’s party, known as *vaskalios* / *syuanchios*.

In Kaltasy and Buraevo districts there is a custom called ‘*kui utchan*’ (selection of / search for a tune), which is performed during weddings in the bride’s home. This custom involves the matchmaker asking guests what they would like to sing about: the journey they took to the wedding or the treat on the table. They are then asked to perform a song that they have brought with them. The melody of this song is called ‘*meyy kui*’, which means the melody of the older generation, or the ancestral chant (Hristolyubova, Minniakhmetova, Timirzyanova, 1989, p. 93). According to this tradition, the guests enjoy themselves, dancing and singing various songs. It is believed that if the wedding goes smoothly and everyone has fun, a happy life awaits the newlyweds. During the village celebration, the residents walk down the street with an accordion, singing the wedding song ‘*syuan kui*’ (ibid.: 93–94).

While visiting the village, young people at the bride’s house organise their own celebration, where they gather for *nyl vina* (lit. girl’s wine), as noted by Lyudmila Hristolyubova, Tatiana Minniakhmetova and Raisa Timirzyanova. In the evening, friends of the bride and groom are the main hosts, treating the guests with food and drink, singing songs, and starting dances. Young people often sing ditties and lyrical songs in Udmurt, as well as in Tatar and Russian. Sometimes, the lyrics are in Udmurt while the melody is inspired by Turkic folk songs. These ditties are often humorous or entertaining (ibid.: 94).

One of the most significant moments in a wedding ceremony is the removal of the bride’s chest, when the women from groom’s family begin to sing traditional wedding songs *veskeli* / *vaskali* / *vaskali gui* / *kui* (the wedding chant of groom’s relatives), *syuan gui* / *kui* (wedding chant), *sandyk gur* (lit.: chant of a chest) (Hristolyubova, Minniakhmetova, Timirzyanova, 1989, pp. 97–98; Sadikov, 2019, p. 188; FM, 2016–2022). It is noteworthy that the bride’s relatives do not join in the performance of the song.

¹⁰ During the collection of songs, we encountered a situation where the local tune for *takmak* songs that were part of the *oshorok* ritual was replaced by the folk music ensemble in Vyazovka village. According to members of the group, due to the presence of shameful words in traditional *takmak* songs, they decided to include a funny game song from the southern Udmurt tradition in their repertoire. During performances, this song is presented as local folklore, and researchers were not informed about this ‘borrowing’. However, despite this, some older members of the ensemble were able to perform a traditional *takmak* that once existed in their village (FM, 2019).

In Buraevo district, before leaving her home the bride holds hands with her parents and then with all those who have gathered. She walks around the house to the accompaniment of singing, and then three times around the carriage that is to take her away. In Kaltasy district, several relatives of the groom take the bride three times around a table singing as they go. The journey to the groom's home is also accompanied by accordion music all the way (Hristolyubova, Minniyakhmetova and Timirzyanova, 1989, pp. 98–99).

This is followed by a wedding feast at the groom's house, where they feast, have fun and go around visiting relatives' houses, dressed in funny costumes. During the wedding, both the groom's relatives and bride's relatives sing glorification songs for each other and various guests. While the villagers celebrate from house to house, young people gather at the groom's house to have *pi vina*, 'groom's wine'. As in the bride's house, there is singing, fun and dancing at the groom's place. The next day, some tests are arranged for the bride and groom which are also accompanied by singing and fun. Bride's guests are once again treated, songs are sung and they are escorted home.

Informants from Yanaul district report that in the past, wedding songs were more often sung in Tatar. Apparently, this is why the Udmurt tradition, as noted by the ethnographer Ranus Sadikov, has preserved texts in the Tatar language that the Tatars have lost (oral communication, 2019). However, we assume that these songs could have been composed by the Udmurts and that this is why they are not found in Tatar tradition.

The older performers mentioned that when wedding songs are sung, the singers should stretch the sound: '*kuz karsa kyrjano ta guyez*' (Andreevka village, Yanaul district) (FM, 2022).

Ethnographic sources from the late 18th century attest to the use of musical instruments in the weddings of the Eastern Udmurts, along with singing. In particular, Nikolai Rychkov noted that "drunkenness, rude songs, accompanied by the ringing of pipes, horns, and guzels, make up the most fun on the wedding day" (Rychkov, 1770, p. 163). Today, at weddings, one can hear accordion and button accordion. However, recordings through speakers have begun to replace live performances of both instruments and singing.

Regarding the distribution of wedding song genres, we have recorded the following terms:

Buraevo, Kaltasy and Yanaul areas: **vaskali** (wedding chant of the groom's relatives), **vaskali gui** (wedding chant of the groom's relatives), **syuan gui / kui** (wedding chant).

Baltachevo and Tatyshly areas: **syuan takmak** (wedding *takmak*), **syuan kui** (wedding chant), **vaskali kui** (wedding song of the groom's relatives)¹¹, **vilken pyrton / kyrjan** (chant of the bride entering the groom's home), **nyl kelyan kui** (chant of the bride's sending off).

In the tradition of Eastern Udmurts, musical accompaniment does not oppose the two sides (the bride and groom), as is observed, for example, in southern Udmurt tradition, where *syuan gur* represents the wedding chant sung by the groom's relatives, and *beris / yarashon gur* the wedding chant sung by the bride's relatives. The only timed chant is the *vaskali*, which is performed by the groom's relatives in the bride's house. According to native speakers, the bride's relatives could sing any other tunes except the groom's part. The same melodies can be designated by the term *syuan*.

As the Udmurt ethnomusicologist Irina Nurieva points out, it is the wedding chant in the musical and song tradition of the Eastern Udmurts that has a unique 'Udmurt' character, with a narrow three-note scale, unlike other ritual chants that are based on wider anhemi-tonic sound systems (tetrachords in fifths, pentatonic, and higher). Our research confirms the thesis of the uniqueness of this chant, which relies on a three-note scale with a specific subterfuge (a-c-d-e). This fact allows us to classify the *vaskali* chant as belonging to the earliest layer of songs. From a melodic perspective, the tune remains stable and recognisable, even with variations.

The rhythmic structure of the songs is based on a sequence of equal durations, which can vary from 10 to 13, depending on the number of syllables in each verse. The form of the stanzas of wedding songs, as with other tunes in Eastern Udmurt culture, has crystallised into a four-verse composition under the influence of neighbouring Turkic cultures.

In addition to the main *vaskali* chant, there are also recorded wedding tunes of later origin, such as *syuan takmak / syuan kui* and *vilken pyrton / kyrjan*. These songs have different melodic content and are characterised by developed pentatonics and pentatonic intonation turns. In some examples, there is also quartic transposition, which is typical of Turkic music. These features are clearly manifested in guest songs, which became the basis for the use of these songs as wedding tunes of later origin.

Overall, the analysis revealed two types of wedding song – archaic and late. These two types have a geographical distribution. The archaic type is found in Yanaul, Kaltasy and Buraevo districts in Bashkiria, while the late type is found in Tatyshly and Baltachevo districts. This corresponds to a division into two large subgroups, Buy-Tanyp, and Tatyshly.

Seeing off a soldier to the army *armiyе kelyan / saldat kelyan*. The recruitment rite, which originated in the 18th century, has formed a whole system of rituals. At the same time, genres of song have emerged that serve this ritual. In the Eastern tradition, the following genres are distinguished: *saldat kelyan* (the chant of seeing off a soldier), *soldat kelyan kui / gui* (the chant of seeing off a soldier), *armiyе kelyan kui / gui* (the chant of seeing someone off to the army), *soldat / saldat gui* (soldier's chant).

The performance of songs as part of seeing off a recruit to the army was accompanied by a celebration, visits to homes, walking three times around a table in the sunshine, leaving the family home, and seeing the soldier off to the outskirts of the village. An essential tradition was the custom of '*gurtan*', a gathering of friends in the village to celebrate the arrival of a new recruit (*lekrok, lekrot, armichi, saldat / soldat*). Relatives, neighbours and friends considered it their duty to invite the young man to visit them. In some cases, villagers would wake the family and go to their homes. The hosts would quickly prepare a simple meal for the visitors. If someone in the household was still in bed, they would

¹¹ According to a recording from a migrant from Yanaul district, this genre is not mentioned in local traditions.

smear their face with soot to try to wake them (Vyazovka village, Tatyshly district) (FM, 2023). In Yanaul district, they would ride decorated horses around the village, singing songs to the accompaniment of an accordion and visiting houses (FM, 2022).

Before leaving, the conscript placed a silver coin on the mat, tied a shirt to one of the table legs, and took a bite of bread that was left for him until his return. There is an old tradition in the villages of Kaymashabash and Stary Varyash in Yanaul district that the deeper the coin is buried, the farther the place of service will be. On the day of his departure from his father's house, his parents held a *kuriskon*, family prayer, and offered porridge. In the village of Barabanovka in Yanaul district, the young man symbolically broke off a corner of the stove and walked around it, and the garden, three times. Before leaving through the big gate the man would leave a piece of bread for his dog. To prevent him from feeling homesick, his parents sent a small daub of stove soot with him (FM, 2022). Before leaving home, the conscript also brought tea for his parents (Vyazovka village, Tatyshly district) (FM, 2016, 2023). In the village of Bolshekachakovo in Kaltasy district, according to tradition, a conscript gives a handkerchief to his grandmother (FM, 2022). And in the village of Urazgildy in Tatyshly district, before the conscript's arrival, guests leave a bottle of alcohol wrapped in paper, on which each guest writes their wishes. After the conscript's return, the bottle is solemnly drunk. Guests who come to the send-off also give the young man some money as a form of financial support.

Exit through the gate was accompanied by the recruit throwing a handful of coins over his shoulder towards the courtyard. In some villages in Tatyshly district, a young man who was leaving would throw a handful of coins either at the *Keremet*, place of worship (Stary Kyzyl-Yar village), or over his shoulder towards the cemetery, so that his ancestors, local spirits and gods would protect him (Vyazovka village) (FM, 2019, 2023). The conscript was escorted to the field gate (*busy kapka*) with songs. Sometimes, conscripts who were talented and skilled at singing and playing musical instruments would sing and play themselves.

During the send-off ceremony, songs were performed in Udmurt, Tatar and Russian, with the latter being less frequent. Musically, recruitment tunes are diverse, featuring a developed melody within an octave or more, and a wide range of anhemimetric sound patterns. The rhythmic structure clearly reveals an eight-time pattern, with an 8- to 7-syllable verse structure. These characteristics indicate the influence of the Turkic musical traditions. With the evolution of the folklore tradition, new songs emerged. Performers distinguish between *pinal gui*, 'new tune' (lit. young chant), and *vashkala gyi*, 'old tune' (lit. old chant). During the Soviet period, the repertoire of recruitment songs included patriotic author's compositions (one such tune, No. 177, was recorded in Shudek village in Yanaul district).

According to informants, many of the rituals associated with sending off recruits to the army are borrowed from the neighbouring Tatar-Bashkir tradition. The Udmurt custom of hammering coins into a mat at home is also observed, but this rite has largely disappeared or is only carried out in an abbreviated form in the parental home today. There are some exceptions, however, where the tradition of 'wires' is still observed in certain localities (for example, in Vyazovka village in Tatyshly district).

Funeral and memorial ceremonies belong to the category of rituals related to crisis and transition, representing ancient religious beliefs and reflecting the mythological ideas of the Udmurts regarding their worldview and the relationship between the living and dead.

Eastern Udmurt funeral and memorial practices consist of several stages, including funeral preparations, a night vigil, a public farewell ceremony, the actual funeral, and private commemorations held on the third, seventh, fortieth days, and the anniversary. Additionally, there is a rite of animal sacrifice in honour of the deceased parent one year or more after death. These events are followed by regular calendar-based, family, and occasional memorial ceremonies. There is also evidence of a special ritual performed every three years.

In the culture of the Udmurts, during times of crisis (such as funerals, weddings and military service), there are often songs and crying¹² that carry both psychological and symbolic meanings. According to the informants, a song sung with crying helps the singer to express emotions and find comfort: "*kyrjasa berdyny no kapchiges lue*" (song makes crying easier) (Bolshekachakovo village, Kaltasy district) (FM, 2023); "*berdiskod ke nosh syulem no nebe inde*" (if you cry, your heart will soften again); "*berdiskod – sinkyli pote, katem byre ini syulemedly*" (when you cry tears are falling down, and the numbness of your heart is gone), and "*kyrjasko ke, berdysko ke, van kuyike tarale*" (if I sing, sing and cry, all the pain will go away) (Petrovavlovka village, Tatyshly district) (FM, 2023). In general, it can be said that the performance of songs at funerals and memorials serve two important functions. First, they serve as a psychophysiological way to defuse the situation and release emotions, bringing people together in a shared experience. Second, they provide a means of communication with the other world, through the intentional and specific execution of the music.

In the culture of the Eastern Udmurts, a variety of songs are associated with funeral and memorial services. These songs reflect different aspects of the ceremony or the location where they are sung during a funeral: *okton kui / shei okton kui* (funeral chant), *kulem murt dyrya kui* (a chant performed in the home of the deceased), *shei kelyan kui / shei kelyaky kui / kulem shei kelyan gui / kulem murt kelyan kui / kulem kelyan* (the chant of seeing off the dead), *kulem murt doryn gui / shei doryn kui* (chant performed by the deceased), *murt kulyku kui* (chants during the funeral) and *kulem velyn gui* (chants for the deceased). Other songs focus on the emotional aspects of mourning: *dezh kyrjan, kaigyrn kui, ketkurekton kyrjan / kui*. There are also songs named after specific people associated with them, such as *Apkarim kui / shei doryn kui*. In some cases, the deceased may have requested that their favourite songs be played at their funeral.

¹² In this case, the psychophysiological reaction of a person is intended, and not the genre of the song.

The songs are sung during the night vigil at the deceased's coffin. As a rule, one person sings and then others join in. The removal of the coffin is also accompanied by singing. In some villages, sad songs are played on the accordion when the body is taken to the cemetery (Sadikov, 2019, p. 206; FM, 2023). In the village of Shudek in Yanaul district, at least three sad melodies are sung during the funeral (FM, 2022).

During private commemorations to accompany the soul of the deceased in the village of Verkhny Tykhtem in Kaltasy district, memorial songs are sung, for example *kiston kui* (Sadikov, 2019, p. 209). In the village of Bolshekachakovo a similar situation occurs when food gifts are left at the gate and a memorial chant called *kistonyn kelyaskyku* is performed (FM, 2022).

In the tradition of the Buy Udmurts a special ritual of sacrificing livestock was performed in honour of a deceased parent after a year or so. This ritual was called *ly kelyan* (lit. 'sending the bones of the [sacrificial animal]', *ullan vandon* / *ullan vesyaschon* / *ullan syoton* (stabbing down, praying down, giving down), or *val syuan* (horse wedding). A horse was sacrificed for a man and a cow was sacrificed for a woman. The ceremony took place in a solemn and cheerful atmosphere and was attended by family members and villagers. The bones of the sacrificed animal were taken to the cemetery in the night, before midnight, and were hung in a tree near the grave of the deceased. The gifts were given to the deceased. This ritual was accompanied by a special chant, which is no longer remembered today, although it was possible to find a recording of a *ly kelyan gui* (chant of the bones of a sacrificial animal) in the archives of UIHLL UFRC UB RAS, recorded in 1982 in the village of Shudek in Yanaul district. The melody is performed to the sound of takmaks, which can also be heard in other contexts (No. 181). Another valuable find was a recording of *ly kelyan gui* performed in the village of Kaymashabash in Yanaul district in 2023, to the melody of a *vaskali*, wedding song (No. 144). Performing a memorial chant to the melody of a wedding song indicates the archaic nature of this chant: "in the past, each *syuan* chant was not only a wedding chant, but had a more generalised meaning for this area – it was a symbol marking a turning point in someone's existence, the transition to a new state of life" (Vladykin, Churakova, 2012, p. 36). Finnish researcher Uno Holmberg's materials confirm this information. He noted back in 1911 that the Eastern Udmurts performed wedding songs during this ceremony. When they went to the cemetery with funeral gifts they sang and had fun, as if it was a wedding (*Puteshestviya k udmurtam i mariytsam*, 2014, p. 111). They would ring bells tied to the horses' collars, as noted by Sadikov (2010, pp. 58–59; 2019, p. 189).

According to researchers, the tradition of the Eastern Udmurts once included a memorial rite of sacrifice that was performed every three years (Wichmann, 1894, p. 40; Sadikov, 2019, p. 211). For example, in the village of Budya Varyash in Yanaul district, sheep were sacrificed in the cemetery grounds and the sacrificial meat was shared among family members at ancestral sites. After the meal, having gathered together, they walked around the cemetery, playing the accordion and singing songs (Sadikov, 2019, p. 211).

Funeral and memorial rites often include poetic texts with detailed philosophical reflection, expressions of grief, and appeals to the dead or on behalf of the dead. Performing mournful songs outside of these rites is discouraged, especially among young people, as it is believed to bring bad luck, grief, and a difficult destiny.

There is no single typical tune, but there are several characteristic tunes recorded in different localities. Among them, a chant with a descending-ascending melody under different designations is often performed: *okton kui*, *kulon kelyan*, *kulem murt doryn kui*, *kaigyron kui* (Nos. 3, 51, 105, 128). All funeral and memorial songs are based on angemitonic sound patterns (pentatonic in octave volume and wider). The wide range of the scale is explained by the peculiarities of melodic development, when the first period of the musical stanza sounds more often in the upper register, and the second in the lower. The Chuvash ethnomusicologist Mikhail Kondratiev designates such a deployment of melodics as a "phase" deployment, when the beginning of a song "captures the upper (sometimes middle) part of the scale with a temporary support (stop) on one of the middle tones", and the end "is built on the lower segment of the scale" (Kondratiev, 2007, p. 98). Each song is distinguished by the presence or absence of melismatic decorations. The pace depends on the mood of the participants.

The Eastern Udmurts believe that how well you treat your guests and create the atmosphere of the event during the spring and autumn commemorations (*tulys no sizyl kiston*) influences the state and mood of your ancestors. Therefore, one of the important components of the ceremony is to sing songs, which, as informants say, "decorate the ceremony". Songs accompany the feast and visiting houses. During the feasts, various guest tunes can be performed or so-called ancient tunes, such as *peres kui*, *meyy kui*. Sometimes, remembering their deceased parents, people sing tunes such as *anaylen* / *ankaylen guyez* / *kuyez* (mother's tune), *ataylen* / *atkaylen guyez* / *kuyez* (father's tune). The lyrical song 'Vozh badyar, oy, kad ik' (Like a green, oh, maple) and later author's songs in Udmurt, Tatar and Russian are also played as funeral and memorial tunes. For example, in the village of Andreevka of Yanaul district performers noted the popularity of the borrowed author's Tatar song *Par alma* by Sania Akhmetzhanova, music by Zufar Khayretdinov (No. 129). The functioning of this song within the framework of funeral and memorial ceremonies is quite characteristic of the Udmurt folklore tradition: the motif of the loss of a loved one, present in the text of the song, turns out to be associated with other life circumstances, i.e. in connection with someone's death (FM, 2022). During a ceremonial visit to the houses of relatives, street tunes of *uram kui* are sung. All the listed song genres of funeral and memorial rituals in most cases represent a borrowed layer of the Tatar tradition.

Recently, there has been a trend of publishing posts on the Internet with photos of the deceased. Modern author's songs are necessarily attached to this, and music videos with photographs of the deceased are also created. These videos can also be shown during private commemorations for the deceased.

Hosting *kynoyaskon* is an important part of the calendar, and of family, ancestral and occasional rituals included in the system of ethical norms of behaviour and communication. People visited both relatives, neighbours and fellow villagers. It was also a common occurrence to visit different villages. It was considered indispensable to host the guests of a neighbour or relative if they had hosted yours.

The tradition of performing guest songs among the Eastern Udmurts is quite rich and diverse. They bear the main burden of servicing many rituals and celebrations. Guest songs have a significant communicative function, through them the motifs of joy from the meeting, philosophical reflections, extolling each other, didactic motifs and even hints about the end of the holiday are discussed. The dialogue between guests and hosts takes place through guest songs.

Based on the situation, origin and the role of the performer, we have identified the following chants: the guest chant, old and new guest chants, chants of treating guests, drinking chants, and personal chants (see the Index of Genres). Personal chants deserve special attention because they receive their designation from the name of the performer from whom they were first heard. According to performers, their parents, fellow villagers or skilled singers had their favourite songs, which they often sang during guest appearances and receptions. After their death, these songs are always marked by the ‘authorship’ of the original source (Pchelovodova, 2013, pp. 49–55).

Skilled singers were called *mylny kyrjas* (lit. ‘skilled singers’). They had the ability to sing long melodies and melismas: “*kuz kuyen kyrjalo*” (lit. ‘they sing a long melody’) (Starokalmiyarovo village of Tatyshly district) (FM, 2019) or sing beautifully “*shuldyr kyrjalo*” (they sing beautifully) (Vyazovka village, Tatyshly district) (FM, 2023). People who could not sing were called *mysyz* (lit. ‘those who cannot sing’), *pelyaz gondyr lyogem* (lit. ‘a bear stepped on the ear’). In the village of Vyazovka they say about such people: “*Kin dyr puly koshke, kin dyr vuly koshke*” (someone goes for firewood, someone goes for water) or “*Ogez kuroly myne, ogez puly myne*” (one goes for straw, the other for firewood) (FM, 2023) (compare with the Russian saying, one goes into the forest, another goes for firewood). Loud-voiced performers are called “*gumy gylyon*” (throat-trumpet), squeaky performers are “*changylda*” (a squeaky-voiced person) (in the villages of Vyazovka and Novye Tatyshly, Tatyshly district) (FM, 2023).

There are also ideas about singing villages where talented performers live. The village of Sary Varyash in Yanaul district and the village Vyazovka in Tatyshly district were mentioned: “*Danly Varash gurt vylem ta.... Tatys, pe, nyllyos berdysa koshkozy val. Danly Varash, pe, val talen nimyz*” (It was the famous village of Varyash.... From here the girls, they say, left crying [when they got married in another village] (Sary Varyash village) (FM, 2019); “*Vyazovka talanto es. Kyrldjas vanzy no*” (Vyazovka is a talented [village]. All are singers) (Sary Kyzyl-Yar village) (FM, 2019).

In the village of Kaymashabash in Yanaul district, the role of the *myzgan* accordion in the performance of *uram kui* (street songs), which are performed while walking down the street, is considered: “*Myzganen aybat, tazy kuara ug okmy. Myzganichi srazu kui pyrte i kapchiges, cheber kyliske*” (It’s good with an accordion, otherwise there is not enough voice. The harmonica player immediately sets [lit. introduces] the motif, and singing is easier, more beautiful. Then it takes the soul [lit. twists the heart]) (FM, 2022).

In the tradition of performing guest songs, the Eastern Udmurts have a unique physical experience. During the singing, one of the guests, or the host, stands up and extends their arms over the table. Other guests also rise and join hands with the person standing. Everyone sings together, moving their arms up and down in unison. Then, the person whose hand occurred at the bottom of the line lifts the hand, releasing it. According to the informants, this gesture is an essential part of the hosting process, expressing joy, unity, and respect for one another. Irina Nurieva has noted the significance of handshakes in Udmurt hospitality: “The handshake, which in modern society serves as a greeting or farewell, takes on new significance in ritual contexts. It symbolises unity among members of the same clan or community who participate in shared ceremonies such as weddings and calendar rites” (Nurieva, 2021, p. 217).

It is impossible not to notice the significant influence of Tatar-Bashkir musical culture on guest songs. These songs are characterised by a richness of melodic embellishments, especially in ancient melodies like *peres / meyy kui / gui*, in nominal chants, as well as widespread intra-syllabic singing (although there are also songs in which a single syllable corresponds to a single note, known as *takmak*) and pentatonic scales that span a wide range within an octave.

Guest songs are very different in terms of melodiousness. According to the performers, Tatar and Bashkir folk songs, as well as author compositions, are increasingly entering the repertoire of guest songs, both in original form and in translation into the Udmurt language. They spread and become firmly established in the song culture, becoming part of the rituals. It is also common practice to enrich the local repertoire with new songs after visits to other settlements and regions. Now, there is also a wider variety of songs in the village, including folk and author songs from Udmurtia. However, they are not as popular as Tatar or Bashkir songs.

Thus, the presented material demonstrates the predominance of guest chants in the genre system of this area. Even today guest chants play a significant role within the tradition. These factors allow classification of guest tunes as centralising, forming the core of the Eastern Udmurt song system. The distinctive features of guest chants, both in terms of poetry and music, allow us to associate them with a later layer of songs that have a direct connection with the culture of neighbouring Turkic ethnic groups (Tatars, Bashkirs, and partially Chuvash). Funeral and memorial songs, which are also popular in the local tradition, are part of the same stratum. Wedding and calendar melodies undoubtedly belong to the archaic layer, which is supported by previous studies (Vikár, Bereczki, 1989; Nurieva, 2013; Smirnova, Bochkareva, 2020). The determining factor for wedding tunes is a narrow volume of scale and recognisability of melody. Calendar tunes are characterised by strict timing. Furthermore, archaic melodies of purification rite and spring mummi-

fication have been preserved only in the tradition of the Eastern Udmurts. However, even here, we observe the influence of the Turkic tradition, for example, melismatic singing in the chants of the Great Day.

Lyrics present the maximum, but not full, preservation of Eastern Udmurt dialect features¹³. The materials state that archaic language forms have been preserved in the speech of the Eastern Udmurts, despite the influence of literary Udmurt, Russian, Bashkir, and Tatar. Today, alongside dialect forms there are also examples of literary Udmurt norms.

In particular,

- **ɵ** is a back-row variant of a vowel (phoneme) [ɯ] that is close to a phoneme (vowel) [ɯ] in the Tatar language: *чагөр инмөн* (in the blue sky)¹⁴;
- **ÿ** is the rounded vowel of the upper rise of the front-middle row: *Асьме гүмөрмө орччөччозь* (until the end of our time);
- **ö°** is a representative of the pre-Udmurt rounded [ö], the rounded vowel of the middle rise of the anterior-middle row: *Ен бө°р(ө)дөтэ* (don't make me cry);
- **ä** is an unstressed vowel of the lower rise of the front row: *Мäклэн ал сьäськаёсөз кадь* (like scarlet poppy flowers);
- **ɲ** is a back-lingual nasal consonant that is an example of the preservation of archaic dialect phonetics: *Жиңгыр но жаңгыр ми лөктөкө* (when we arrived noisily and cheerfully).

A normal phonetic phenomenon is the primary dissimilative palatalisation of affricates **č** and **ж** in **ч**, **э** and **д'**, in position before -Гж(-) and -Гш(-): *Озьы каром, чужодйг* (we'll do it this way, cousin), *дюжыт но(й) дюжыт но(й) гурезь дьылын* (high in the mountains); the substitution of **č**- и **ж**- with **ш**- и **ж**-, deaffrication of **ж**- into **ж**-. *Бизьөса пөри äpämäe, шогөса басьтй пар пуну(у)* (I ran into the woods, cut down a couple of aspen), *жөк вөллёсө журам но(й) сьäська кадь* (like flowers grown on the table). The presence of various types of decanting, i.e. the substitution of **й**- in the position of Гг(-) and -Гк(-) with the palatal consonants **э** and **д'** is also a characteristic phenomenon for the speech of Eastern Udmurts: *Эу-няннёс но удалтоз* (and let the bread be good), *дюжыт но дюжыт пужым дьылысь* (from the top of a high pine tree). There are also examples with the ancient bilabial consonant **ɣ**¹⁵, where it comes into opposition with the consonant **в**- and testifies to its phonemicity: *Бадьпу кырыжесз но уань* (a crooked willow also exists). The adverbial suffix **-тозь** in dialects and in the lyrics of songs is used in the phonetic version **-ччож** and **-йччож**: *Ась(ө)ме гүмөрмө орччиччож* (until the end of our lives). There are also other dialect features that are easily noticeable and understandable.

There are several types of vocalisation in the lyrics, in different positions in the word (at the beginning, middle and end):

- **й** – so-called iotic vocalisations before vowels at the beginning of a word ((й)өвөл, (й)азэиччож), at the end of a word after vowels (но(й), эуоме(й), нюлэскө(й)) and less often in the middle after vowels (жөккы(й)ышетэд);
- **ы/ө** – vocalisations between consonants in the middle or end of a word. In this case, the vocalisation is a vowel sound (for example, *анай(ы), мед(ө), сол(ы)дат, сьäсь(ө)ка*). If the first type does not change the duration, the latter contributes to its fragmentation into small units;
- **йө** – *но(йө), гүр(ө)ласа(йө)*;
- **у** – *(у)ай, нюлэскө(у), бича(уа)нө(у)*;
- **уа** – *дэра(уа), көр(ө)за(уа)са(уа), ка(уа)э ик*;
- **уä** – *äpä(уä)мälэн*;
- **уö** – *кө(уö)р(ө)эаса, гө(уö)нэ(й)*;
- **уо** – *күно(уо)ёсмө*;
- **уэ** – *лөктэ(уэ)м*;
- **ö** – *бөлись(ö)ке*.

In the unfolding of the melody, inserts used at the end or middle of the verse play a role (interjections, particles *ла(й), ла, лай, лä, шол, гөнэ, нэ(й), нэ*).

¹³ For more information, see Nasibullin, 1972; Kelmakov, 2004, 2006.

¹⁴ In the dialect of the Eastern Udmurts there is an intermediate phoneme that is located between the sounds [ɯ] and [ө]. This phoneme is denoted as [ɯ̹] and has specific acoustic features that make it difficult to distinguish. Due to its similarity with these sounds, it can be challenging for speakers of other dialects to hear and understand.

Various linguistic processes have also had an impact on the Eastern (Zakam) dialect, leading to unique features in speech and song. Because of these nuances, the authors have chosen not to use a separate symbol for this phoneme in their lyrics. However, those who want to learn more about the Eastern Udmurts can refer to the audio recordings that are included with the publication.

¹⁵ In the lyrics, the authors decided not to use the symbol **ɣ**, which is generally accepted in Udmurt dialectology, to denote a bilabial consonant. This is done to avoid excessive loading of the text and possible misunderstanding on the part of ordinary readers. The standard letter **y** is used instead of this character. We assume that the dialect feature expressed in this way is conveyed sufficiently and clearly without interfering with text recognition.

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