

## Dialogue Incantations<sup>1</sup>

In folklore genres, dialogue is a widely used artistic and expressive means, its length, content and functions defined by the genre it is used by. Short dialogues are found in fictional folk narratives from fairy tales to anecdotes. A fairy tale or joke can be based solely on dialogue (for more, see Krikmann 1999) while dialogues in myths are only a phrase or some phrases long, just like the dialogue incantations under observation here.

In narrative folklore genres, dialogue has the main task of making the story more lively and imitating the characters' speech, widening knowledge about the characters and their inter-relations. In older epic runo songs, inter-character dialogue is a common structural and performing aid (e.g. *Brother Seeker* 'Vennaotsija', *The lost geese* 'Haned kadunud', *On mother's grave* 'Ema haul'): a song character/agent narrates the story as dialogical episodes that are united into a whole with shorter action-describing parts. Abundant dialogue is also found in older ring dance game songs, transitional and newer folk songs – dialogue helps emphasise the drama and movement of the events. Dialogues play an important role also in non-fictional (oral) narratives where they have in addition to aesthetic functions also those of raising the credibility of the story, confirming claims and convincing the listener. Those are only some of the functions that dialogues carry in stories.

Dialogue incantations are distinguished from other types of verbal magic by their performing and spreading styles as well as structure – the text of the ritual is made up of only dialogue. A *dialogue* is an exchange of speech acts between two speech partners in turn – taking sequence aimed at a collective goal. The dialogue is *coherent* to the extent that the individual speech acts fit together to contribute to this goal. As well, each partici-

pant has an individual goal in the dialogue, and both participants have an obligation in the dialogue, defined by the nature of their collective and individual goals (Walton 1992: 133). The verbal part of a dialogue incantation consists typically of one to three short-phrased questions followed by answers; the dialogue may be closed with an imperative sentence or confirmation. The series of questions and answers is usually repeated thrice.

The accompanying ritual – a minimalist performance or a longer traditional healing ritual – has a marked set of characteristics or norms of time, space, characters and actions. In written records, the dialogue is performed as direct speech and is correspondingly separated with typographical signs. Healing words performed in dialogue have a somewhat narrower field of usage than for example legend-like incantations with epic elements or short-formed incantations. The clearly structured dialogical communication between healer and patient or healer and helper indicates that this is an older layer of folk healing and magical influencing (see also Honko 1960: 91; Tolstoi 1984).

This kind of symbolic dialogue was used to secure economic success, to ward dwelling-eating bugs and parasites, crop- and cattle-hurting wolves, birds of prey and vermin. Dialogue incantations were used to heal rheumatic inflammations, traumas and a limited range of other ailments of difficult clinical picture. Healing words include numerous records of so-called diseases gotten from birds or animals that were named after the suspected disease-causer (hen-defect, snake-defect, horse-defect, hedgehog-defect, etc.) that was tied in to the etiology of the problem as well as the healing methods. Most probably, such ailments are due to their archaic names and explanations among the oldest disease concepts. Dialogue incantations are based on old beliefs, models of communicating with the surrounding environment and are a reflection of these. Their attractive but simple form has helped the old-fashioned methods and beliefs remain alive. Although for decades now there are no verbal warding formulas related to work, forestalling an evil eye or dialogue-employing healing methods in active use, memories of such warding or healing traditions are still being recorded as well as related by older South-Estonians.

Dialogue incantations have been distinguished as a subgroup by the researchers Nikolai Poznanski (1917: 58–73), Anna Astahkova (1928: 50–60) and Kārlis Straubergs (1939: 247–252). Baltic Finnic linguist Ada Ambus and researcher of Votian folklore Paul Ariste have used a similar term in categorising Votian material – dialogical incantations (Ambus 1962: 224; Ariste 1974: 46–59). Latvian incantation researcher K. Straubergs included among dialogue incantations also legend incantations with inter-textual dialogues (e.g. dialogue between Christ and disease demons or Christ and a disciple) which in newer narrative theory are also called a pseudo-record of the character's dialogue (Gennette 1980). In addition, he considered magical short formulas to be dialogue incantations – either the warding reply to praise or a malevolent statement from a stranger (e.g. words of repentance, a reply to praise). In Estonia, the latter are traditionally systematised as warding formulas and part of these have been considered sayings from the linguistic or folkloristic point of view (Baran 1997; Oim 2007) or incantations (Kõiva 1990: 131). In their magical orientation (meaning harm: warding) and presentation (relations with a ritual or ritually important time) the short formulas are loosely related to dialogue incantations but they are similar to some healing dialogues and symbolic dialogues performed on a calendar holiday. Praise or condemnation had to be responded to with cursing or a short formula to stop their effect, but last century the reply was often only said in one's mind and not aloud. Characteristically, the verbal answer could be absent and be replaced with a magical procedure.

Primarily, our attention is focused on the structure of dialogue, the accompanying rite institution and participants of a magical rite, its requirements to room, space and object and their inter-relations. Dialogue incantations are also compared to mythical incantations that contain dialogue.

My hypothesis is that the dialogue incantation is a peripheral type of short dialogue – a form of either convincing, discussions or informing dialogue that supports the symbolic rite. Secondly, I presume that the stereotypical form of dialogue is easily adaptable to new presentation situations. Since we are dealing with a heritage genre sensitive to objects, space and time, the process-mediating narrative allows for modelling of mental maps

and to determine areas either important, liminal or peripheral to the tradition. The goal of the article is to observe relations between text and presentation based on Estonian material with comparative material from Baltic-Finnic, Baltic and Slavic tradition. Since the process of a magical short rite is mentally modelled to a specific landscape and related to the movement of characters therein, it is in principle possible to recreate from written records the course of the rite by using cognitive mapping (Ryan 2003). This has been done with a sample text to illustrate the healing method.

## Characterisation of the Material

The earliest archival records date back to the 1880s. Those are mostly narratives or stories of events and incantations or only the incantation, written from memory. The corpus as a whole includes roughly 500 texts, including a minority of descriptions from witnesses of an incantation rite and completely lacking audio or video recordings of actual healing rites. There are no dialogue incantations in the healers' own healing or incantations diaries – an indication that the subgenre was transmitted orally only. The few variants found in 19<sup>th</sup> century Baltic German scholarly publications are decades earlier than the oldest archival records but identical to later manual recordings in their content's characteristics: Alexander Heinrich Neus' and Friedrich Reinhold Kreutzwald's *Mythische und magische Lieder der Ehsten* includes a dialogue to heal colics (Neus & Kreutzwald 1854: 89), Jean Baptiste Holzmayer's *Osiliana II* a dialogue incantation against dog disease (Holzmayer 1873: 103) and Ferdinand Johann Wiedemann's *Aus dem inneren und äusseren Leben der Ehsten* rice words used to heal children (Wiedemann 1876: 383).

The character of the material allows for reconstruction of the function and performing situations of dialogue incantations, but for obvious reasons the written archival records of the oral heritage provide no clues to religious stance and detailed space-time-subjective relations. However, the witnesses and their individual actions during the rite can be followed, the time-wise anchoring of the incantation presentation and the timeline of events can be determined. The records provide to a degree less information about the location of performance.

## The Structure of the Dialogue

As the main purpose of communication is to understand one another (Scollon & Scollon 1995) and the transmission of messages (Fiske 1990 [1982]: 2), so is dialogue incantation oriented to fulfilling similar tasks: the dialogue between the healer and rite witness/patient is directed to a specific disease, demon or being and it is used to relay an invariant message of communication. Communication is used to activate a common information field or a system of meanings common to the parties, to use it to change the behaviour or state of mind of one party. The communicational model of dialogue incantation is in several respects similar to T. Newcomb's triangular model of communication acts. A and B are communicator and receiver, X is part of their social environment. ABX is a system, which means that its internal relations are interdependent: if A changes, B and X will change as well; or if A changes her or his relationship to X, B will have to change his or her relationship either with X or with A. The minimal components of the ABX system are as follows:

1. A's orientation towards X, including both attitude towards X as an object to be approached or avoided (characterized by sign and intensity) and cognitive attributes (beliefs and cognitive structuring).
2. A's orientation towards B, in exactly the same sense (positive and negative *attraction* towards A or B as persons, and of favourable and unfavourable *attitudes* towards X).
3. B's orientation towards X.
4. B's orientation towards A.

Since A and B act in a dialogue incantation as people of common purpose for whom X is something or someone known to both of them and both participants A and B have similar attitudes to X, then according to T. Newcomb the system is in equilibrium (Newcomb as referenced in Fiske 1990 [1982]: 31–32). Let us observe more closely, what kinds of dialogues are deployed in dialogue incantations. Unlike free communication, folklore does not have the concept of commitment – a basic idea behind all dialogues as well as reasoned argumentation does not matter for many cases. Douglas N. Walton has divided dialogues based on their communication form as follows:

1. Persuasion dialogue.
  - 1.1. Critical discussion
2. Information-seeking dialogue
  - 2.1. Interview
  - 2.2. Advice-solicitation dialogue
    - 2.2.1. Expert consultation dialogue
3. Negotiation dialogue
4. Inquiry dialogue
  - 4.1. Scientific inquiry
  - 4.2. Public inquiries (e.g., into air disasters)
5. Eristic dialogue
  - 5.1. Quarrel (Walton 1992: 134).

It is characteristic of all dialogue incantations that the structure of the dialogue is extremely stable and simple: the communication between the healer and the witness of the healing ritual mediates and characterises the ritual activity and conveys the ritually invariant message for the warded object, telling it to disappear, get out, be destroyed, and leave somewhere else. In *information-seeking dialogue*, the goal is for information to be transmitted from one party to the other and this is precisely what happens in a dialogue incantations: the warded (always a third party, the listener to/addressee/receiver of the message of the dialogue) gains information about what is planned against him, the disease/disease spirit is acknowledged the intentions of the healer.

In the whole territory of Estonia (and in Europe in general) the most common structure is question-answer. The question is pertaining to the activity, followed by an answer describing the activity, the answer being an indicator focussing the aim of the activity. According to Douglas N. Walton, in a dialogue, each participant has a set of propositions called that participant's *commitment set*. As the various speech acts of asserting, questioning, etc. are brought forward in turn by the participants, propositions are added to or deleted from the participants' commitment sets (Walton 1992: 135).

The verbal formula communicates and verbalises to the warded object the wishes of the healer and the course of the process.

*What are you chewing on? – I'm chewing on arthritis* (H IV 4, 163/4 (10) < Anseküla parish);

*What are you lifting? – I'm lifting arthritis* (E 56675 (113) < Tallinn);

*What are you grinding? – I'm grinding flies* (E 863 (1) < Kolga-Jaani parish).

On single occasions, the reply is extended by a few additional words, and even more rarely, it is provided in verse form:

*Eks ma säärin sääse sääre,  
kiian (tõukan) kihud kolu ääre,  
tirin tiivad tiide viltu  
kogun kehad keset kolu<sup>2</sup>* (H IV 2, 593/4 (164) < Väandra parish).

The second most common structure of verbal incantations is question-reply-confirmation, which we can classify as a derivative of persuasion dialogue.

This structure was most common in North Estonia and in some areas of South Estonia, but always accompanied by the first structural model. Question-reply-confirmation is a common model among Latvians (Straubergs 1939), Lithuanians (Mansikka 1929; VaitkeviFienP 2006), Votians (Ambus 1962), but was also known in Finnish (SKVR) and Slavonic tradition (Peskov 1980).

Confirmation is an imperative addressing or order to complete the activity by all means, to prevent the disease or ward a creature for good:

*Chew it until it is healed!* (RKM II 330, 290 (3) < Simuna parish);

*Cut it, cut it all off!* (H III 30, 856/7 (21) < Rõuge parish);

*Hack it until it is healed!* (EÜS II 554 (58) < Kuusalu parish).

Confirmation is also an offered solution to end a crisis. On some occasions, the confirmation may also be in verse form or contaminated with another short formula (*Strangers to the manor and family to home!; May the pain disappear from our child's bone and flesh!*)

The rituals were usually repeated three times; in South Estonia and on the island of Saaremaa the spell was recited for

nine times. The latter was also practiced in the Latvian tradition.

The communicative environment or the changing of the ritual actions and objects also influences the relayed messages. In some cases, during the ritual the participants changed their place and/or magic objects. In that case the text of the dialogue was adapted and synchronised with the ritual. Sometimes the charm was built on three different magical preventive methods and the questions and answers mediating these. Such spells are also known in Livonian, Karelian and Lithuanian folklore, leading to the conclusion that such customs were widely accepted. Sometimes, though not very often, a change in the activity necessitated a change in the way people asked questions and provided answers. Longer formulae of questions and answers were uncommon and probably depended on the skills of the person asking the questions.

However, since we are dealing with events and dialogues recorded after their performance from memory, or even oral communication later recorded, it is impossible to encertain how short or long the series of questions and answers were in the performance situation and whether the records present an adequate representation of the actual events, or a summary of that. For example, one warding dialogue is described in the following way:

***On warding cockroaches***

*If there were roaches in the house, one person had to go out and the one who stayed inside had to eat something. The person outside had to knock on the door. When the person inside made a noise, the person outside had to ask: "What are you doing?"*

*The person inside the house replied: "I'm eating."*

*So the person outside the door asked: "What are you eating?"*

*The person inside said what he or she was eating.*

*The person outside asked: "What are the cockroaches eating?"*

*The person inside replied: "The cockroaches eat this and that."*

*Talking this way made roaches disappear (ERA II 196, 119/20 (767) < Laiuse parish).*

Short questions and answers are characteristic to all traditions. For example, a Czech ward against barleycorn:

*The person visiting an ill person needs to tell him three times:*

*“You have a barleycorn growing,” and the ill person must reply with:*

*“It isn’t barleycorn!”*

*If he replies thusly, three times the barleycorn will disappear (Velmezova 2004: 152).*

Either several incantation genres use monologue persuasion asking the other party to go elsewhere or recommending to find better conditions elsewhere or to accept certain offerings. The wolf or hawk is in dialogue incantations promised a symbolic part of domestic animals, persuading thus the wild animal to keep away from domestic animals. Such incantations are close to contemporary negotiation dialogues directed by official mediators with the aim of the dialogue to “make a deal” over the interests of the parties, giving in some points and making claims in others (Walton 1992: 135).

Let us observe mythical incantations, a small group of incantation types of healing words. The text of the incantation typically describes a journey in a mythical world where a saint or Jesus meets with angels or disease spirits and engages in dialogue with them. Dialogue is also found in some of the incantations that feature a travelling saint’s, Jesus’ or his mount’s trauma and the healing of that, with the narrative frame including declamation of a warding, healing or binding incantation. The following example comes from the type Jesus on the way to church (the second Merseburg incantation):

*Jesus rode a donkey up to the high Mt. Zion.*

*Partridge flew and rattled.*

*Maria was scared,*

*Maria’s ankle joint was sprained,  
and a woman came towards them.*

*Jesus told the woman to heal.*

*Maria’s ankle joint was sprained  
and Jesus told the woman:*

*“Heal this Maria’s ankle joint!”*

*And the woman said: “I don’t know healing.”*

*And Jesus said: “I myself want to  
bless your mouth and your hands,  
read these words unto [the hurt place]:*

*“Bone, bone, to bone,  
marrow, marrow, to marrow,  
sinew, sinew, to sinew,  
joint, joint, to joint,  
blood, blood, to blood,  
skin, skin, to skin,  
meat, meat, to meat”* (E 82640/1 (1) < Pärnu-Jaagupi parish).

The characters and their dialogues vary widely within this incantation type. The above example is closer to the language usage of older bible translations, the longer statements of the parties are not inspired by the ongoing rite but rather develop the narrative mythical event ending in teaching the woman words for sprains.

Other mythical incantation words also include incantation formula within narrative text. For example, in blood words the three brothers utter the formula stopping bleeding:

*Three brothers went up to the hilltop.  
The first one said: “Blood, stop!”  
The second one said: “Blood, stop!”  
The third one said: “Blood, stop still!  
Thus are the words of our Lord Jesus Christ”* (ERA II 70, 121 < Kullamaa parish).

In words for witch-arrow, Jesus reads the formula addressing the disease elsewhere at the end of a dialogue with angels, and the incantation ends with a closer appealing to higher help *In the name of God the father, God the son and God the holy spirit.*

*Three angels come right down from heaven.  
Jesus went to meet them, asked: “Where are the three of you going?”  
“We are going to help the sudden illness,  
to read the words for stroke.”  
Jesus said: “Come along.  
Go, go, I want to come.  
If it came from morning, let it go to south,  
if it came from south, let it go to evening,  
if came from evening, let it go to north,  
in the name of God the father, God the son and God the holy spirit!”* (E 78491 (16) < Väandra parish).

In healing words based on describing or reporting mythical events, dialogue has an enlivening and action-carrying role; it is a means of building a healing narrative, a story independent of the accompanying rite to relay an invariant message. As such, it is considerably different from the direct simplistic communication of dialogue incantations that only describe the rite.

The accompanying healing methods are, compared to dialogue incantations discussed above, modest: the disease locus is surrounded with circles or crosses, is blown upon, ironed, massaged, word are read onto it. However, the accompanying system of taboos determines that a professional can only perform the incantation.

### **The Functions and Application of Dialogue Incantations**

Functionally, dialogue incantations fall into two wide groups: those related to beneficial to work and fertility and warding and healing words. Let us observe briefly, what either group was used for.

The first group includes using symbolic dialogue as introduction to critical or festive periods of the ritual year. Traditions include long-standing beliefs, customs and verbal communication norms that determined communication opportunities with strangers during works sensitive to a stranger's eyes, such as making soap, weaving cloth, making butter, etc. – these included archaic formulas and magical greeting words exchanged with workers. Specific time-related fertility and expedition intents include records of symbolic dialogue to bring Christmas / New Year inside, arousing the wind at New Year's Eve and shaking apple trees to ensure a rich crop.

The group of warding and healing words is more motley and abundant since dialogue incantations have been part of the healing rite in both popular veterinary as well as human medicine. Influencing natural objects and agrarian activities included magical mowing of cabbage eggs or the cabbage shoots and the grinding of flies on St Matthew's Day on the islands, West Estonia and some regions in South Estonia. Magical grinding without using incantations has had a somewhat wider spread. A similar

dialogue incantation and warding rite is also known in Latvia (Straubergs 1939: 249) and Finland (SKVR).

Dialogue incantations were used to ward various household parasites (bugs, cockroaches) with the same text slightly changed to ward different creatures (types “What do cockroaches/crickets eat?”, “Are cockroaches/crickets home?”). Due to stereotypical beliefs and the somewhat similar lifestyle of the bugs the dialogue incantations were easily readdressed from one object to another, a small healing rite adapted to ward a different creature.

Single South Estonian texts describe binding the wolf’s mouth either on St. George’s Day or Good Friday so it wouldn’t harm cattle. Again, similar parallel texts can be found in Latvian (Šmits 1940–1941: 2047) and Finnish tradition and according to Mirjam Mencej’s monograph, the tradition was widely spread in the east and west Slavic heritage area (Mencej 2001). According to beliefs, St. George was the master and protector of wolves, riding a chosen wolf observing whether cattle is harmed in the herding season and making sure wolves pursued revenants, the devil and fairies. He was also expected to bind the mouth of the wolves on St. George’s Day and loosen it again on St. Michael’s Day. The belief that St. George’s Day determines the relations between domestic animals/cattle and wild animals/wolves, is reflected in a number of St. George’s Day warding magic rites from making fires and symbolically poking wolves’ eyes with burning branches to imitating binding the wolf’s mouth by symbolically closing a lock.

Popular veterinary science centred on healing sheep (or less commonly, pigs) that rejected their offspring. Again, records come from South Estonian parishes with correspondences in Latvian folklore (Straubergs 1939: 248). Earlier manuscripts include also single records of preventive protection of chicken against hawk and puppies against wolf – in both cases, a rite is performed that offers the forest a symbolic part of the animal. Latvians have used performing such simple rites and incantations to assure economic success of the household and warding against wild predators. In similar manner, they have deployed dialogue incantations to ward also moles, sparrows and hawks as well as to get a good crop of cucumbers and apples. Since the larger majority of Estonian texts of this incantation group come from South

Estonia and the western islands, where dialogues were more common in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century it is reasonable to surmise one of the reasons the tradition survived was influence from abundant Latvian folk heritage. At the same time, while dialogue incantations to ward natural objects are much more productive and common in Finnish material, there are often no common beliefs and corresponding incantations in Estonian material.

Healing people with dialogue incantations is the best-documented group, nearly two hundred texts. Although it was used for healing toothache, halltõbi 'grey disease' (malaria), *pist* 'stab' (stabbing internal pains) and traumas, the most numerous are records of joint diseases (first of all wrist joint inflammation or *nari*, in dialect also *rodi*, *kidi*, *kidsi*), colic and congenital children's diseases.

*Nari* accompanied seasonal work and was healed by tying (red) thread, horsehair, oven broom binder, etc. around the wrist, pressing between creaking trees or doors, and lifting heavy objects. The healing dialogue accompanying the healing reflects the actions of the analogue magic based rite. The most popular type "Chewing the *nari*" was evenly spread all over North Estonia, in some South Estonian and island parishes as well as in Finnish and Latvian tradition. The firstborn child, especially son, or somebody who had eaten bear or wolf meat chewed the diseased spot and growled all the while. The type "Lifting *nari*" meant raising a built house, sauna or fence with the ill hand three times. Similar activities and healing with a dialogue incantation were known in Votian, Karelian and Finnish healing traditions. "Cutting *nari*" involved symbolic cutting of the ill person, accompanied with a dialogue incantation in Saaremaa Island, with parallels in Latvia. "Axing *nari*" was symbolic chopping with an axe (recorded from Harju County), with parallels in Latvian material.

"Braking *nari*" with flax brake and "Creaking *nari*" between a door and trees rubbing against one another were formulas less well known and diffusely dispersed in Estonia, while similar texts and activities were used in Latvia and Lithuania. However, "Tying *nari*" is well established in their cultural space while it has only a single record in Estonia, although tying sans incantation has been used in the whole Estonia.

Colic have been interpreted as: “The stomach starts to ache fiercely and is hard, the mouth starts to water” (Türi parish) or more commonly as “Sinews that swell in hands or body because of overstretching” (Pilistvere parish), healed with salt water, country herbs, massage as well as with cupping horns. Symbolic healing methods included hacking a grave and pressing with an axe. Massage was accompanied with reading words but dialogue was rare.

However, a special spot was reserved for verbal magic and especially dialogue incantations that were used for healing congenital children’s diseases since they were practically the only help there was. These diseases were associated with sanctions resulting in improper conduct of the child’s mother or violation of established traditional norms (during pregnancy, the mother had been startled by an animal, had participated in a slaughter, slaughtered animals herself, hit them or was cruel to them). The pathology and clinical picture of congenital children’s diseases often vary, as different symptoms and diseases are grouped under the same name. It was believed that the child’s appearance and behaviour reflected something typical of a particular animal, which permitted explaining the cause of the disease. Healing involved transfer of the disease to the causing agent of the disease, usually not a specific animal but rather a representative of the same species. As in all rituals based on analogy, a corresponding animal, or else its hair, skin, etc. was required for carrying out the healing ritual. A ritual conveying a verbal message was performed only on snake disease, dog disease, wolf disease and devil disease, or spasticity.

The sick child was identified with the supposed cause of the disease or the disease demon was exorcised from him: one sick with wolf disease was hit like a wolf, one sick with snake disease was hit with snake-killing cudgel, he was passed through a bundle of rope (i.e. through a snake), was washed with water that a snake skin had been soaked in. One sick with dog disease was whisked like a dog or with a dog, was hanged, weighed, ground or boiled in imitation. According to belief, binds used in healing (a horse hobble, straw string, oven broom binder) had to have been stolen or brought in secret. In healing dialogues, the questioner had to run around the house, sauna, and barn or healing location and could perform one rejoinder in every round. Sometimes (e.g. in

the case of snake disease), the questioner has ridden an oven broom. Healing children's diseases often involved three different activities with questions and answers.

*"What are you grinding?"*

*Mari shouted loudly in reply: "I am grinding a dog diseased one."*

*Thusly was asked and answered three times (ERA II 240, 88/9 (66) < Torma parish).*

*If a young child suffered from dog disease, the kettle was placed on fire without water and the child was held above the kettle. The child's father asks three times from behind the door:*

*"What are you boiling?"*

*"I'm boiling the dog."*

*Then the child is cured (H II 771 (6) < Hanila parish (1890)).*

Unlike other diseases, children's cross-hobble – a child cannot walk – and chopping this from the feet practiced only in South Estonia as well as Livonia and Latvia. Its South-Estonian name *äiokammits* has pertained the archaic name for the devil *äio* – 'devil's hobble' (Loorist 1949: 148 ff.; Loorits 1951: 9). The hobble was cut or chopped symbolically at a crossroad, over the threshold of a sauna or house with the child's legs tied, for example, with (stolen) stallion hobble or straw rope. If a person and an animal share a disease with a similar etiology and symptoms, they were both treated with the same magic spells and treatment methods. This is the case also with 'devil's hobble' (*äiokammits*), or spasticity. If a calf could not stand up, a dialogical spell was used to "chop" the disease from the crossed legs.

*My cousin, she had a three-year-old child who would not walk. Then there was this other old woman, she told her to bring the child to her. Therefore, we went towards Latvia. There were many crossroads. One held the child, the other looked from afar, and the old woman wrapped tows around the child's legs, placed a knife on, and hit the knife with the hammer. The day was already over, it was evening. The person who as holding the child asked:*

*"What are you chopping?"*

*The other replied:  
"I'm chopping the crossed legs."  
"Chop then, so that it is chopped off!"  
And the child was cured, is now 47 years old. He also  
had a child with a woman, and would not stand up either.  
Sat in a basket for three years and died, she was. The chop-  
per was already dead by that time (RKM II 346, 587 (27)  
< Rõuge parish).*

Night lamentation (a child's incessant night-time crying) is related to night lamenter of Karelian Finnish tradition (Loorits 1951: 490; Kõiva 2001) and probably spread to Estonia via Votians. The term 'night lament' *ööitk* was well known in the Vaivara-Jõhvi region, the former Votian contact area, and records of the incantation come from 19<sup>th</sup> century Jõhvi parish. Healing night lamentation with dialogues was practiced in Votian, Karelian and Finnish populations.

The previously much wider spread of dialogue incantations is indicated by the fact that they were used to chew hunger from a child, so-called bristles removed, navel was chopped, convulsions burned, malaria scorched, *pist* (internal pains), toothache, jaundice and shoulder healed. These are single records from regions where dialogue as a healing method was relatively more in used during the time of making the record – for example Saaremaa and Kihnu islands and some parishes in North and South Estonia.

## **The Ritual Dynamics of Dialogue Incantations**

Rituals incorporate social agreements and those are used to relay invariant messages (Rappaport 1984: 208), but they also have a fixed performance side. According to Victor Turner, a renowned classic in ritual research, ritual systems include actions, objects, events, and words for communication with unseen powers. It also includes the transmitting of these rites by an oral tradition (Turner & Turner 1978: 244), of which we have access to those written down by correspondents and from informants during fieldwork. Next, let us observe the nonverbal components of incantations that are necessarily integral to the rites, and then move on to time and space characteristics important for beneficial, ward-

ing and healing rites and their influence on the dynamics of the ritual.

Victor Turner distinguished three interwoven components of liminality (Turner 1967: 99–108; Turner 1982: 203–206), of which for our purposes the most important is the first component or communication of sacra, where secret symbols are communicated to the ritual subjects in the form of exhibition of sacred articles (relics, masks, instruments, “what is shown”), actions (dancing, “what is done”) and instructions (mythical history, “what is said”); the symbols represent the unity and continuity of the community; they are simple in form, but, because of their multivocalism, they are often given complex cultural interpretations.

Even in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, symbolic healing used the four basic elements – earth, water, fire and air. The etiology of a disease could be related to those same elements and the healing rite included symbolic washing off the disease with water or moonlight as well as various symbolic ways to eradicate it (burning, hanging, and cutting up the disease). The symbolic action was based on analogy magic and this was used not only to heal but also to ward natural objects. For healing, herbal remedies, pharmacy products, incantations, massage, sauna, laying on of hands and other methods were used. Widespread symbolic magical healing methods involved using clothes or objects that had been in contact with the sick person’s body, blood, or the affected or hurting spot. The most typical symbolic eradication methods were scorching or smoking out, washing off, driving out (inc. with unpleasant sounds or smells), burying into ground, transfer to natural objects or living beings (the Moon, stones, trees, birds, animals), beating, scaring, separation (cutting open or chopping loose), destruction (hanging, beating), sending away with a dead person, hiding oneself from the disease, addressing the disease causer back to the person who sent it or to his home. Disease-warding activities were cussing, cheating (changing outlook or name) as well as symbolic feeding or giving an offering. Preventive measures included amulets, fetish objects, protection letters, prayers and incantations. This varied list indicates how rational healing methods were interwoven with symbolic and magical activities and rituals based on beliefs.

A ritual symbol is defined by its semantic relationships. It has multiple meanings, or significata, can be associated with

other distinct significata, and can simultaneously condense and represent many things. On the other hand, a ritual symbol is multivocal – it can represent multiple themes simultaneously, it expresses a theme in a formalized manner and does not allow for individual choice in its expression (Dolgin & Kemnitzer & Schneider 1977: 184, 186). Within the entire system of the ritual, there are clustered together a set of dominant ritual symbols which are centralized during each ritual. For example, out of all possible symbolic warding methods, one was chosen for a specific ritual. Dialogue accompanied symbolic mowing (cabbage), cutting (*nari*, *äiokammits*, toothache), biting (*nari*, hunger), grinding (flies, colic), binding (*nari*, *äiokammits*, wolf), chopping (*nari*, navel, *äiokammits*), sieving (hen), lifting (*nari*), burning (children's cramps, *halltöbi*), braking (*nari*), squeezing (inbetween creaking objects (*nari*), boiling (dog disease), whisking or braking (dog disease, snake disease), heating (dog disease, *pist*, toothache), hanging (dog disease), weighing (dog disease), hitting (wolf disease). This list highlights measures used in rituals, the simplicity and variance of the symbols and activities. Thus is the dog disease healed in imitation of dialogue incantations by boiling, whisking, hitting, heating, poking, hanging or weighing. The text of the dialogue incantation and its meaning formed in correspondence with the chosen disease explanation and the symbolic performance/ritual symbolic acts. This means that symbols and symbolic activities are reflected in the text, questions and answers, in the changing objects.

In the case of dialogue incantations, an important role is played in addition to symbols also by repetition of the ritual. Repetitive acts, such as chants, songs, or prayers, quiet a troubled mind, making room for mental (and spiritual) clarity (Howe 2000). Usually, the rituals occur in an organized cyclical or repetitive fashion.

Each new presentation of the ritual includes the possibility to initiate variability but regular repetition excludes any great variance in every new performing. Incantations as well as their accompanying rituals are balanced in their structure and content and remain without significant changes. In the case of religious rites, frequent uniform celebration guarantees protection from distortion in memory (McCauley & Lawson 2002: 50), while in the case of incantations, the constancy of the ritual is

guaranteed by a system of beliefs and stereotypes governing its presentation (see Kõiva 1990: 165 ff.; Kõiva, forthcoming). Still, depending on the causal explanation and carried meaning, the magical objects and acts could vary, one warding method was replaced with another since the goal of the ritual – to convey an invariant message to the warded-against – did not depend on such changes.

### **Active Participants**

Dialogue incantations have three active parties: message-sender cum ritual-performer, helper, and message receiver cum addressee to whom the invariant message of the performed ritual is aimed. The message sender and performer of the ritual can but does not have to be a folk healer. Within reason, one tried to manage and heal within the family circle and with one's own provisions. If this was not enough, one turned to a specialist outside the family. If a sheep reject a lamb and did not let it suckle, the message sender was the woman under whose care sheep fell in the farming family. A man (i.e. of the same sex as the offender) who also filled the role of the question asker mowed cabbage shoots. In case of a children's disease, the message sender could be not only a folk healer but also a wife/mother with the same skills, and a woman could fulfill the role of the helper. The questioner could also be a widow (woman), somebody who had eaten bear or wolf meat or any skilled healer from the same village or neighbourhood. Thus, in the case of dialogue incantations the message sender and Ritual Master was a specialist or somebody to whose area of responsibility the "transgression" or illness belonged to, but sometimes also a person of special magical properties (widow, eater of bear or wolf meat, unbinder of *vainuköis* 'rope of wrath' – dissolving the rope-like company of *sciara* army worms).

Ritual Master directed the helper whose role could be performed by a family member, often also a woman since children's diseases and taking care of the sick were commonly women's jobs. The dialogue could be helped along by, for example, the sick person (in healing *nari*, colic and joint diseases) or the first-born child/son. In some cases, the helper's role was performed



*Photo 1. Theodor Saar, schoolteacher of Kihnu Primary School in 1935.  
Photo by Önnis (ERA, Foto 1204).*

by a random bypassing male villager (healing a lamb-rejecting sheep), less often a female villager. The role of the helper was at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century rather loosely restricted, according to records.

A good example is the following account of the healing of his wife's shoulder, written down by a Kihnu Island schoolteacher

and long-time folklore archive correspondent Theodor Saar. He begins by describing the arrival of the healer:

*My wife had a sore shoulder: had a small lump on her shoulder joint. She talked about this with Madli Sarapik, the local villager, 69 years old, and asked her to cure her shoulder. Madli was, after all, a renowned village healer. In the beginning of January this year Madli came to visit us and began the healing ritual. She had taken along an old axe without a handle, which she wrapped in her apron. The apron had to belong to a widow (Madli was a widow). I was writing in the room with my back towards the door.*

Having read the healing words three times, Madli asks Theodor Saar to help:

*Then Madli turned to me, telling:*

*“Now you ask: What are you hacking there?”*

*And replied to my question:*

*“I’m hacking your wife’s shoulder, so that it would be healed upon the word of my mouth, upon my arm.”*

*This was repeated three times.*

*Then she took my wife to the next doorway, that leading to kitchen. Since I was no longer there, I heard Madli asking the same thing that she had asked me before from my young daughter. The reply was the same and it was all repeated thrice.*

At the third threshold there are is helper to use, and thus the accounting ends with the following description of the last healing schene and the correspondent’s personal comment:

*After that, Madli told the patient to spit on the axe three times and took the axe outside. I don’t know what she did with the axe afterwards (ERA II 235, 247/50 (54) < Kihnu parish).*

The previous account indicates that an important aspect to using dialogue is the presence of person well versed in the tradition being in the community, the co-operation of ritual participants or randomly encountered people and opposition to the warded message receiver, resulting in the enemy shifting to a conflictical position.

## The Parameter of Time in Dialogue Incantations

Let us first observe the parameter of time according to Victor and Edith Turner that a *ritual is linear, not circular*, i.e. that it is rather “going somewhere” than returning to where it started from (Turner & Turner 1978: 161–163) and consider on the other hand the conclusion from the last-but-one section that rituals are often cyclic in nature and they are regularly repeated. The category of time as marker of change, determinator of the succession of events and means of eliciting desired events was in folk medicine and in the case of incantations in particular a significant marker. In the case of dialogue incantations there are four different categories of time relations:

1) Incantations and related symbolic rituals were calendar anchored to a specific date in the ritual year, for example success-ensuring dialogues: bringing in the Christmas (New Year), arousing the wind at New Year’s Eve, shaking apple-trees, warding hunger. Calendar precisely marked warding rites included grinding flies on St. Michael’s Day or binding the wolf’s mouth on Good Friday. Some of these customs had a marked day of beginning and, in principle, also an opposing day in the other half of the year when the reverse ritual should have been performed (e.g. unbinding the wolf’s mouth as opposed to binding the wolf’s mouth on St. Michael’s Day). However, for some reason the ending point was, as a rule, not closed with a ritual but was instead time-wise anchored with a proverb or freely formulated verbalised statement concerning the matter. Such incantations related to the calendar cycle and important markers of the ritual year were repeated cyclically or every year at the same time and in the same way.

2) Incantations performed in conjunction with the lunar calendar and first, phases of the Moon. According to belief, the old moon deterred diseases (at least visible diseases), the growing of aboveground parts of plants, fertility in animals, while the new moon was beneficial to growth and proliferation, being a good time for performing household, promoting and growing incantations. The time when there was no moon in the sky was received ambivalently – it was rather better for deterring and harming, also warding and harming, but also

for healing some diseases (regarding happy and unhappy time for Estonians, see Kõiva 1986: 8–10; 1990: 177 ff.; Tolstaja 1991: 63).

3) Customs, beliefs and incantations related to a day of the week and/or a certain part of it. The prevalent method was dividing days into the even and the odd, with the even days of the week (Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday) considered traditionally good for beginning works and for healing, while the odd were unsuitable for such activities. For dialogue incantations, the most auspicious was Thursday (or three consecutive Thursdays) – the most favoured day for healing rituals in general, and the other even days being less suitable (Kõiva 1990: 178). Single records also mention healing on Friday or Sunday evening or on four Thursdays. For example, cabbage offshoots were destroyed on three consecutive Thursday evening, seldom on three young moons Thursday evenings. It bears mentioning that uniquely to this incantation group, records mention using incantations during the day, unlike several other healing incantation types or, for example, verbal magic regulating social relations where the evening dusk was a prerequisite of the successful performing of the ritual.

4) Situation-based performing – a ritual lacking time anchor and performed according to necessity or whenever the healer had time to visit – postponing to a time better suited for magical healing or warding was for critical reasons impossible (see Kõiva 1990: 179 ff.; Kõiva, forthcoming). The time choice has been mostly situation-based for example in the case when the crop of cabbage was in danger – according to belief, caused by a man passing the cabbage planters without greeting them or having crossed some other important norm.

The previous elaboration indicates that a ritually and symbolically suitable time was waited for when it was useful from a practical point of view. If help was needed fast, the time restrictions were regarded dynamically and based on intuition. Undoubtedly joint inflammation or congenital defects were not so pressing that one couldn't wait for the next Thursday or old moon Thursday, but the same could not be said for acute or traumatic diseases nor if cattle was displaying extreme behaviour towards their offspring. Therefore the time to heal congenital defects is generally specified and lack only in single records.

On the other hand, dialogues for diseases or economic success have no limitation for performing – they were used when needed.

Often there were several time markers to be considered or performing the incantation was anchored to a date, phase of the moon and weekday with possible additional requirements as to the quarter, wind direction and location/room.

Dialogues within one communication episode were performed consecutively but healing incantations were interspersed with breaks for performing magical procedures, running around the sauna or other building or for other acts significant for the ritual. Usually the same dialogue was repeated for three times, indicated by a typical comment: *This was asked three times*. The rules of popular narrating determine that the written record does not include the same number of repetitions but only a short summary and generalisation. The description is repeated if there is a significantly big change. As mentioned above, the same acts or dialogue could be repeated in three different places, with different objects and activities one or three times in a row.

*The narrator had been “boiled in kettle” as a child by her parents.*

*A girl had run around, asking: “What are you boiling?”  
Replied: “Wolf meat.”*

*This was asked three times, then the child was taken from the kettle and she was healed (RKM II 73, 476 (120) < Kihelkonna parish),*

or:

*If a small child has dog disease, the oven is heated and the child is put above the oven and whisked with the tail of a black dog, and one is running three times around the house and every time a circle is completed barks three times like an animal bark, bark, and the one whisking the child asks:*

*“What are you barking [at]?”*

*And the barker replies:*

*“I am barking the black dog’s disease.”*

*Then the child must become free of the disease (H II 37, 701 (11) < Jõhvi parish).*

## Time and Place

It has often been pointed out that rituals are unique because they are situated in particular places and times. They are never pure replications of previous performances or anticipations of future ones (Tambiah 1979: 115). In principle, the above statement is true. However, observing the category of time revealed that a significant portion of healing rituals depended on the situation and were performed according to possibilities and need. This means that time was rendered special by performing a miniature ritual and incantation, the changed role of the participants and the sick, the inclusion of symbolic acts, symbols and objects.

Next, let us observe the space category that has been scrutinised by the humanities since the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century when the keywords migration, refuge, local, global, etc. were first applied to characterising space. Folkloristics and linguistics have treated space-time and solely space relations in myths, fictional folk narratives, fairy tales, historical and belief legends, short forms (Hermann 2002; Looorits 1949: 447, 1957: 169 ff.; Krikmann 1999, 2000), but in incantations, the main interest was the mythical landscapes of incantation texts (Ilomäki 1989; Krohn 1924). The space one lives in became valued only recently with the emergence of the research paradigm of oral history and historical lore.

Of genres close to incantations, the actual location of acts and its change according to the invariant message and ritual context has been observed in shaman cast spelling (Anisimov 1952, 1967; Vitebsky 2002; Hoppál 2003; Lintrop 1995). A. Anisimov describes how contact with the altered world was maintained by circling the location of the shamanistic rite with fir trees stuck to the ground by their tops (Anisimov 1952: 203 ff.), while Mihály Hoppál has highlighted how the ritual is centred on a tree with ladder rungs to allow rising up to converse with spirits. At the same time, this small ritual is comparable to the world pillar or tree concept (Hoppál 2003: 22, 71, 86, 141; see too Vitebsky 2002: 62; Lintrop 1995: 71 ff.).

Written records of incantations unite the different space models of the incantation text, ritual and writing. Incantation texts present a space that is mythical, foreign and untouched by hu-

man activities, the free wild landscape (sea, bog, fen, forest), and human-made space is represented with the manor and foreign village. The time and space of performing the ritual is tied to a specific village space, though often expressed only indirectly – obviously this did not need to be specified at the time of recording, being self-evident. Generally, the location is much less commonly noted than the time for performing incantations.

The following is an example of contextually implied location of performing:

*If a dog puppy was brought home, it was put in the kettle and a little fire was made underneath. One went and called three times through the leitseaugu ‘venthole for smoke [in a rehetuba ‘barn room’]:*

*“What are you boiling there?”*

*The other replied from the room:*

*“Boiling a part for the wolf.”*

*Then the puppy was let out of the kettle, then of course the wolf was supposed to not touch it. (H II 13, 165 (7) < Koeru parish).*

This example leads to the conclusion that the ritual was performed in the *tulihoone* ‘a house with any hearth’ or in a summer kitchen in immediate reach of the house, in living quarters.

Writing down unites the mythical time of the incantation text with the real time of the ritual and the mythical space of the incantation text with real space of the actual ritual, but adds the time-space reality of the writing act. Coding/decoding such a record depends on how precisely the written medium relays the communication process, the text and its oral presentation, whether it distorts the form and content of the conveyed message, how difficult to understand is it for the contemporary reader.

Generally, the location of performing dialogue incantations was related to the home sphere: the house, sauna, barn, varied with a house or barn rebuilt three times, the farthest locations being garden or field or the fence gate – still, predominantly indoors:

*the oven was heated and the child taken up on the oven and [---] whisked* (H II 37, 701 (11) < Jõhvi parish);

*whisked in the sauna in the following manner...* (E, St K 1, 183/4 (6) < Tõstamaa parish; H II 1, 674/75 (32) < Kuusalu parish).

Most common liminal locations were an indoors threshold, the threshold of the house or sauna, a house or sauna window, the ground in an outdoor room, (dirt) floor in the house, also a crossroad (of four), also the edge of field or forest near the farmstead:

*went to the crossroad and when a man approached, called* (RKM II 72, 121 (2) < Urvaste parish);

*to the eastward dovetail-nouth quoin of the rehealune 'large room in an old farmhouse used for threshing grain' and shouted to a man passing by at the moment* (RKM II 83, 196 (6) < Koeru parish);

*the child is put under the door and the dog walks over him three times* (RKM II 34, 619 (46) < Tallinn);

*snake disease, then the child was put down on the floor and the oven broom was struck to the ground by his head for three times. A scythe could also be used* (RKM II 44, 136 (7) < Setu Country).

If a sheep does not take to its offspring, the mistress took the lamb from the barn in her arms and went to the sauna. Then whenever someone happened to pass, (the sauna was right beside the road), berated that person through the sauna window:

*"Village woman!"*

*"What is there?"*

*"The sheep won't take to its lamb."*

*"Go home, it will."*

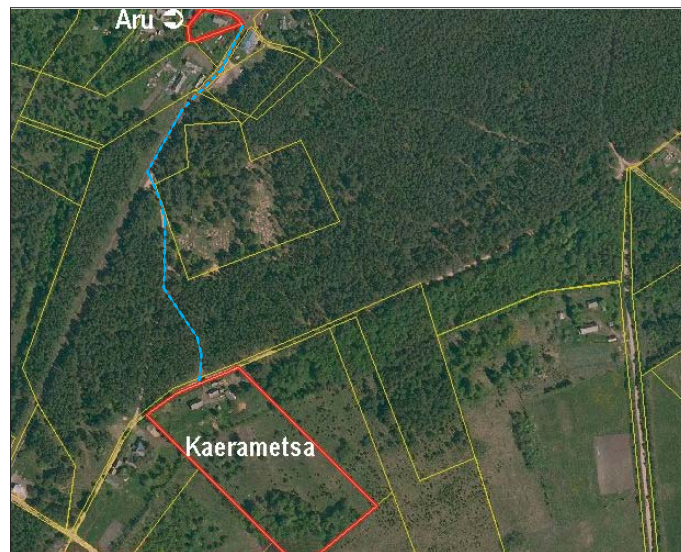
*Then the sheep took to its lamb* (RKM II 30, 232/3 (836) < Setu Country).

Looking for a suitable location from farther away was quite rare. There is an example of searching for a crossroad in Latvia, but

this was again the closest to home suitable place. Spatial anchoring could also relate to quarter of the horizon.

David Hermann uses the locution *narrative domains* to emphasize that stories should be viewed not just as temporally structured communicative acts, but also as sets of verbal or visual cues anchored in mental models having a particular spatial structure (Hermann 1999).

An example to visualise performing an incantation, let us map an incantation recorded by a Kihnu Island schoolteacher. The record is in the first person, specifying the acts and presence of the narrator. The record indicates the healer come at a time suitable for her to the home of the sick person, carrying an axe without a handle in her apron. After some argument, the writer is



*Figure 1. Scheme from Mõisaküla village. On the map there is Aru small farm indicated from where Madli Sarapik was invited to heal the shoulder of Theodor Saar's wife. Three-hectare territory of Kaerametsa looks quite spacious to compare to the house of the healer. Scheme on the basis of the map of Estonian Land Board by Andres Kuperjanov.*



*Photo 2. This is how the healing place looked later. Kaerametsa small farm in Mõisaküla, living house of Theodor Saar that he built in 1930. Photo by Vaike Hang, 1981. ERA, Foto 13210.*

allowed to continue and be present at the incantation performance, though tradition deems it undesirable or forbidden:

*I was writing in the room with my back towards the door. Madli wanted me to leave, but I refused, even though Madli thought that:*

*“The art must not be seen by others.”*

The healer begins by healing with the axe and incantation at the threshold of the room, uttering the words in accordance to genre restrictions in a mutter but audibly to the patient:

*Then she asked my wife to uncover her shoulder and squat on the doorstep. She herself stood behind her, took the axe wrapped in the apron and by applying pressure on the sore spot with the blade, mumbled something to herself, which I didn't hear. My wife recalls that Madli said something like this:*

*“Pain to the old crow,*

*Illness to the magpie,  
Other diseases to the blackbird!  
May Anni from the schoolhouse be healed upon the word  
of my mouth, upon my arm like the sign of god from the  
heaven! May her arm be healed!"*

The completely healing procedure has later been a topic of discussion within the family circle – the writer presents the even in its timeline and fully constructed with the help of what his wife told him. Theodor Saar continues by describing how he was recruited to become a helper in the dialogue. Next, action shifts to the kitchen doorway. There the teachers little daughter is asked to become helper in the dialogue. The incantation is performed three times, after which the healer and patient move to the outside doorway. There, repetition of the ritual does not include the dialogue incantation since there are no more helpers nearby, but the healer does not call for anybody else to assist. The scene ends with the previously quoted spitting on the axe three times by the patient, followed by the healer taking it out of the house.

The whole action is anchored to the indoors of the house and the doorway, the healing route progresses through the house, from doorway to doorway until the disease is taken outside together with the magical helping device. We can only assume whether the dialogue incantation was part of the healer's standard healing scheme or whether it was used to give the ritual expressive and emotional value.

The space of dialogue incantations is centred on the home sphere and close distances, even liminal locations are chosen within the farmstead. An exception to the rule are cases where the disease is believed to have been caused by wolf or other wild animal or bird, although even then the closest possible location or touching point is used, as close to the farm as possible. Naturally, the same rules do not apply to all incantation types and functional groups.

## **Conclusion**

Having the healing ritual rely on the sick and his family, influencing and controlling the surrounding world with calendar rites

was a function characteristic to dialogue incantations. Simple incantation texts and rituals had also an important psychological and social aspect, helping the sick restore health and integrate them into the everyday life of the community, to ease the community's tensions and "disorder". Discussions concerning contemporary healing rituals stress their role in solving social and psychological problems, concluding that *in cases where rituals offer social integration, connectedness or support, to decrease social estrangement or loneliness, such rituals may influence a person's biochemistry to the extent that it brings about a raise in the physical sense of well-being* (Achterberg 1992: 160). The same applies to the village community of the past, to the cleaning, wadig or healing customs applied by an authority figure or member of the family.

The concise verbal parts of dialogue incantations are formal expressions belonging to a group of dialogical speech acts used to exchange information, to convince or conduct basic negotiations. The receiver and addressee of the dialogue was a third party – an undefined higher power, holiness, patron or master, being, disease (demon), disease causer, warded animal or disease gotten from one. It is noteworthy that the conductor of the ritual cum message sender taught his helper his role and verbal responses in preparation of or during the ritual. This creates a picture of an event created on the spot according to traditional canonical requirements, of a ritual where symbols and symbolic acts were important. Dialogue and ritual were fixed in a structure, a timeline, with repetitions and specific space characters. It was canon that protected dialogue incantations from any great changes.

During the ritual, the dialogue was performed in loud voices, but incantations differently from everyday speech: in a low voice or in a mutter, with a special intonation, with different motifs, vocabulary, style and narrative nature of the incantation. On the other hand, the text of dialogue incantations observed and verbalised the accompanying symbolic acts and was easily adapted to a changed performing situation.

Acts used choice of objects by methods combined of similarity, contact magic and imitation (a bundle of rope instead of a snake, placing a snakeskin or snake-killing cudgel into water, using dog hair or wolf's footprints). When sending a disease back,

a representative of the suspected scapegoat's species or supposed harm-doer was punished.

Since we are dealing with a heritage genre susceptible to objects, space and time, the process-mediating narrative may model mental maps and determine areas that are significant, liminal or peripheral to the tradition.

Dialogue incantations are determined in time and space: anchored in the most part to a day of the week, the lunar calendar and other stereotypical religious time requirements. Locating the ritual first inside buildings, a minimalist route from one spot of performing the dialogue to another, the symbolic running three circles around the house or sauna are all part of the spatial concept. An important role is played by using close liminal locations like a doorway, door, gate and the not so close, like crossroads to perform the ritual. Peripheral positions are taken by locations farther from the home and hearth.

Although the structure, used objects and performed acts as well as the verbal part of such healing rites are simplistic and could easily be imitated by knowledgeable people or witnesses, written accounts indicate that a common person does not take the responsibility to conduct an incantation dialogue. Even detailed accounts lament the lack of people with healing skills, causing somebody's offspring to be an invalid. Thus, people who know of the tradition do not believe it possible to simply take the responsibility of conducting a ritual. One is presumed to have in-depth knowledge, be fluent in the multiple meanings carried by symbols and being accepted as knowledgeable by the community – in other words, being trusted in.

## Comments

<sup>1</sup>The present article is based on an overview of healing words published in Finland in 1983 "Virolaiset dialogiloitsut" (*Kalevalaseuran vuosikirja* issue dedicated to popular medicine) (see Kõiva 1983) and the manuscript monograph in Russian *Estonskie zagovory. Klassifikatsiia i zhanrovye osobennosti* chapter "Dialogicheskie zagovory" (see Kõiva 1990).

<sup>2</sup> The text of incantation contains untranslatable words. Thus, only an approximate translation is added:

*I will leg the leg of gnat,  
I will push the midges on the verge of the skull,  
I pull the wings tiide awry,  
I gather bodies in the middle of the skull.*

## Manuscripts

E – Manuscript folklore collection of Matthias Johann Eisen in the Estonian Folklore Archives (1880 to 1934)

ERA – Manuscript folklore collection of the Estonian Folklore Archives (1927 to 1944)

ERA, Foto – Photo collection of the Estonian Folklore Archives

E, St K – Manuscript folklore collection of the Matthias Johann Eisen's fellows in the Estonian Folklore Archive (1921 to 1927)

EÜS – Manuscript folklore collection of the Estonian Students Society (1875 to 1917)

H – Manuscript folklore collection of Jakob Hurt in the Estonian Folklore Archives (1860 to 1906)

RKM – Manuscript folklore collection of the Folklore Department of Estonian Literary Museum in the Estonian Folklore Archives (1945 to 1995)

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