

ESTONIAN ACADEMY OF SCIENCES  
INSTITUTE OF THE ESTONIAN LANGUAGE &  
ESTONIAN MUSEUM OF LITERATURE

# Folk Belief Today



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Tartu 1995

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PAGE LAYOUT: SANDER VESIK  
COVER PICTURE: KÄRT SUMMATAVET  
COVER DESIGN: SANDER VESIK

THE SUPPORT OF THE  
FOUNDATION OF THE ESTONIAN LANGUAGE HAS MADE  
THE PUBLICATION OF THE *FOLK BELIEF TODAY* POSSIBLE

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ISBN 9985-851-11-0

<sup>40</sup>See Note 26, Christiansen, pp. 24-28.

<sup>41</sup>Lysaght P. Quotation, tape No. 1, June 1976. About this legend in the Irish tradition, see É Ní Anluáin. *An Cearrbhach agus an Diabhail*: ML 3015 in Éirinn (The Gambler and the Devil: ML 3015 in Ireland). Student essay in the Department of Irish Folklore.

<sup>42</sup>Lysaght P. Quotation, tape No. 1, 1976.

<sup>43</sup>See Note 31.

<sup>44</sup>In South Wexford there is a song used in this context: *Arise Bonnie Lassy, We'll Bundle and Go* (IFC 107:387), but there is a more widespread one in Gaelic: *Caillin deas crúite na mbó* ('The Beautiful Milk-maid'). In places it is known as a 'cursed song' that was forbidden to sing.

<sup>45</sup>Lysaght P. Quotation, tape No. 7, 1981.

<sup>46</sup>*Béaloideas*, 1971-1973, No. 39-41, p. 95.

<sup>47</sup>See Note 4.

<sup>48</sup>See, von Sydow, C. W. *Övernaturliga vassen. Nordisk Kultur XIX. Folketro*. 1935, pp. 91-159; see also, Hultkrantz, Å. *The Supernatural Owners of Nature*. 1961.

<sup>49</sup>See Note 26, Christiansen, pp. 109-113.

## PAGAN AND CHRISTIAN REALIA IN THE CULTURE OF THE PRE-KAMA REGION INHABITANTS IN THE II CENTURY AD.

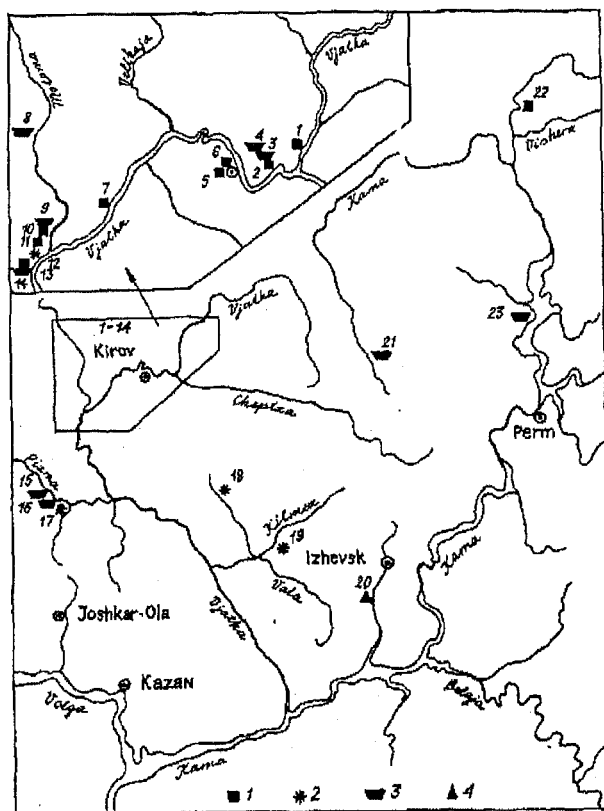
Leonid Makarov. Izhevsk, Udmurtia

The problem of mutual influence of pagan and Christian religions is of major importance in the sphere of ideology of the peoples of the medieval East Europe. The adoption of Christianity by the ruling circles of the Kiev Russia has been viewed as a historical process. However, the pagan beliefs, having millennia-old traditions in the consciousness of the people, could disappear only gradually and, thus, the 11th-13th centuries are considered to be the period of double beliefs and that of the struggle of the Orthodox Church with the relics of the pagan traditions. The involvement of some other alien ethnic inclusions into the process of formation of the ancient Russian nationality further contributed to the obscuration of Christian dogmas. It is especially true of the region between the Volga and the Oka rivers and the Novgorod territories – the regions serving as the starting points for the Russian colonisation of the areas between the Kama and the Vyatka rivers.

We know from the chronicles that the Finno-Ugrian population of the Dvina and Pechora rivers have been tributaries of the Novgorod principality, and the

area between the Kama and the Vyatka paid taxes to the princes of Kiev.<sup>1</sup>

Descendants of the Slovenes, Krivich and Vyatich who had been already absorbed a lot of elements of culture and anthropologic type of the Volga-Finnic peoples,<sup>2</sup> started to inhabit the region of the middle Volga where they arrived at the end of the 12th and the beginning of the 13th century. Some of the Finno-Ugrians, forced by the Russian colonisation and the pressure of the Orthodox Church, migrate to the territories behind the Volga and on the Lower

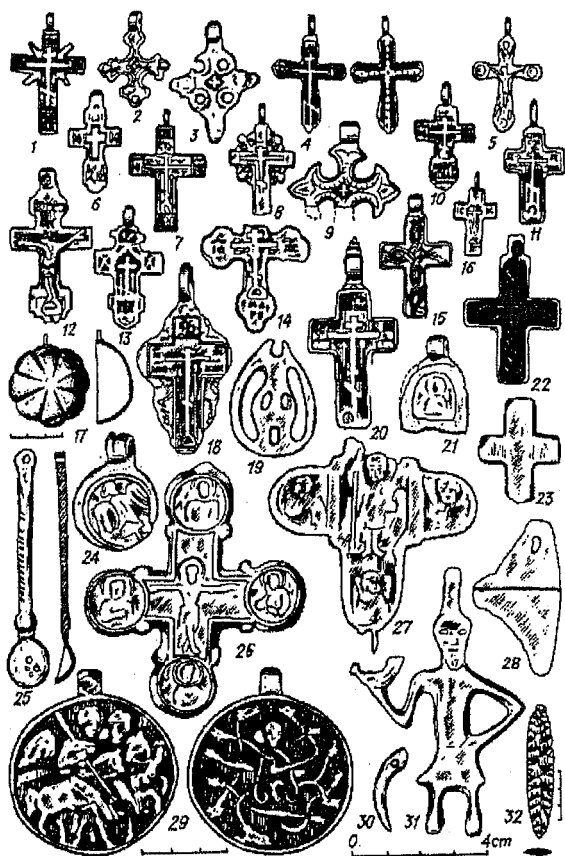


1. Archaeological memorials of the pre-Kama region of the 12-19 c. mentioned in the given article (1 - settlement, 2 - settlement, 3 - grave, 4 - finding). 1 - Podchurshinskoe, 2 - Nikulchino, 3, 4 - Nikulchino II, I, 5 - Khlynov, 6 - Vyatka, 7 - Orlov (Khalturino), 8 - Spasski, 9, 10 - Khovrovsk, 12 - Iskra, 13, 14 - Kotelnichki, 15 - Emanaevo, 16 - Poksta, 17 - Poksta II, 18 - Khichany, 19 - Balmin, 20 - Malopurginsk, 21 - Rusinovsk, 22 - Iskor, 23 - Anushkar,.

Kama.<sup>3</sup> The newcomers come into contact with the aborigines of the region – the Udmurts, and the conflicts which were inevitable at first soon made way for peaceful coexistence.<sup>4</sup> The isolation of the region, strengthened after Batu's invasion, promoted consolidation of different groups of Russian and Finno-Ugric peoples in the frameworks of the independent Vyatka area. Thanks to different literary sources it is possible to observe the peculiarities of inter-ethnic contacts on the territory of the region, particularly in the sphere of spiritual culture.

One can find traces of pagan cults of the 10-13th centuries in the historical monuments of the Vyatka territory (ill. 1): thus bronze figures of a man with a beard and a hat, which have been connected with the figure of Perun by a number of researchers have been found even in the early 20th century<sup>5</sup> (ill. 2-31); an oval iron plate with a stylised anthropomorphic figure (ill. 2-19) resembling the pendants of the Siberian peoples<sup>6</sup> has been found in Nikulchino; a pendant-spoon (ill. 2-25) of the 10th-12th centuries has been found from the stronghold of Vyatka and interpreted by the scientists as a symbol of well-being; a pendant resembling the blade of an axe<sup>7</sup> (ill. 2-28), found in Nikulchino, is again pointing at the worship of Perun. Besides, there have been amulets made of tusks and teeth of wild animals worn as charms against the evil. Protection and healing have also been the functions of the Stone and Bronze Age flint 'thunderbolts' (ill. 2-32) that have been found in Khlynov, Nikulchino and Rodionov.<sup>8</sup> A painted clay egg with yellowish-green glaze<sup>9</sup> was found in the area of the upper Kama. Similar wares had been widely spread in Kiev Russia in the 11th-12th centuries.<sup>10</sup> The cult of egg as a source of life was connected with spring festivals absorbed in the most by Easter.<sup>11</sup> The serpentine amulets, cast into one foundry form, have been found in the upper reaches of the Kama or Cheptsa rivers<sup>12</sup> and in South Udmurtia. On the front side of them one can see a picture of two horsemen, on the back side a ball of serpents. There are no inscriptions on the amulets, only a circular rim with some incisions (ill. 2-29). These amulets may refer to the 13th-15th centuries, because one can notice that the technique of their making was not on a high level yet. The serpentine amulets were the monuments of mixture of Christian and pagan beliefs in Ancient Russia.<sup>13</sup>

There are numerous findings related to Christian religion. For example, there are the crosses (over 40 items) dating back to the 12th-16th centuries and wares referring to the 17th-19th centuries which have been found on graves (ill. 2, 1, 16, 18, 20, 22, 23). Besides, some bronze encolpions (ill. 2-26, 27) were found, and the earliest of them had been made in the pre-Mongolian period, the latest of them had been in use till the middle of the 15th century. There are two stone and three bronze icons in the collection of worship accessories



2. *Worship accessories of the pre-Kama memorials of the 12-19 c.* (1-18, 20-22, 25-29, 31 - bronze, 19 - iron, 23 - cut glass, 24 - lead, 25 - bone, 32 - flint).

1-16, 18, 20, 22, 23. - body-wear crosses, 17 - lamp, 19, 31 - anthropomorphic amulets, 21 - pendant-icon, 24 - ceal, 25, a pendant-spoon, 26-27 - enkolpions, 28 - a pendant resembling a blade of an axe, 29 - the serpentine amulet, 30 - amulet, 32 - the tip of an arrow (*gromovka*).

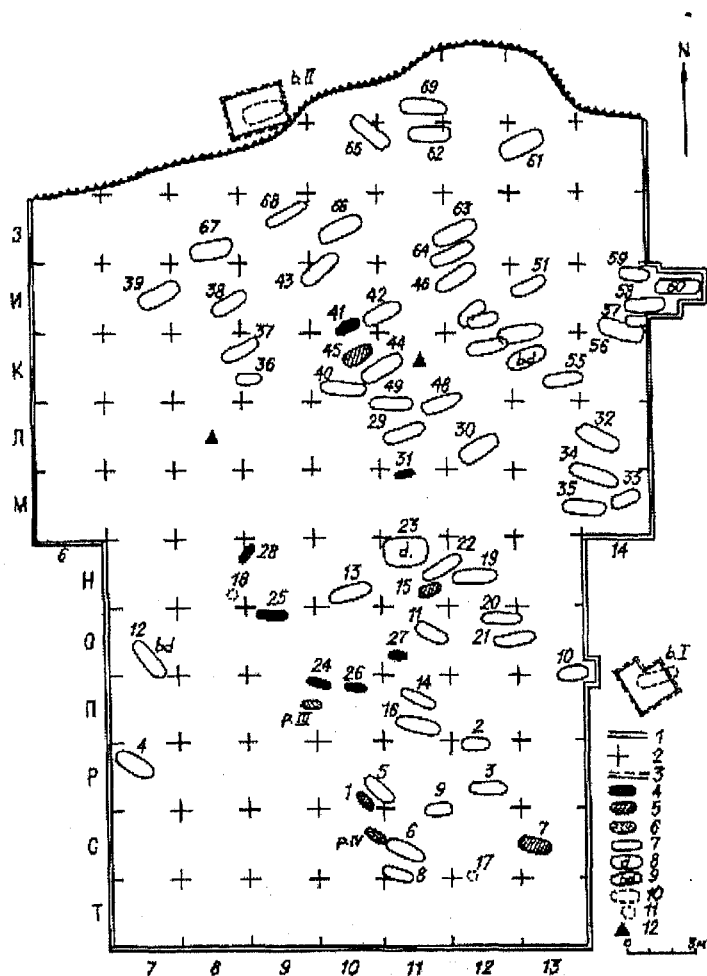
1, 24 - settlement of Sabalino, <sup>2-</sup> settlement of Khovrovsk, 3-5, 7, 9, 13-15, 19, 21-23, 27, 28, 30 - settlement of Nickulchino, 6 - settlement of Kotelnicki, 8 - grave of Nickulchino I, 10 - Grave of Spasski, 11 - Settlement of Kichany, 12 - settlement of Orlovsk (Khalturino), 16 - grave of Kotelnichki, 17 - settlement of Iskra, 18 - grave of Rusinovsk, 20 - settlement of Balmin, 25 - settlement of Vyatka, 26 - settlement of Podchurskino, 29 - finding of Malopurginsk, 31, 32 - settlement of Khlynov.

(ill. 2-24). They date back to the 12th-15th centuries. There are Christian symbols of the archangels on the lead seal of the 13th-15th centuries (ill. 2-24). A small bronze lamp from the settlement Iskra (ill. 2-17) of the 13th-15th centuries and an earthenware candlestick from the Khlynov Castle of the 15th century also relate to the objects of worship.

However, the presence of the outward material objects of Christianity should not actually mean its prevailing position in the people's mentality. The burial customs, for example, tend to question the influence of the official religion: graves are not too deep (seldom more than one meter, and Shabalinsky grave depth is only about 0.2-0.4 m); varying position of the corpses and of their hands; cinders found in the graves hinting at full or partial cremation; single cases of the skeleton being broken or buried with crooked legs, pair burials (ill. 3-2, 3-10, 11).

The most archaic burials have been found on the Emanaevo grave of the 12th-14th centuries. The graves here resemble a fan – they radiate from an empty central square to different sides, with correspondingly varying orientation. Similar grave planning has been found on soil graves of the 10th-13th centuries, in Novgorod region, but there the main centre of burials was a conical-shaped hill that had been standing there in former times.<sup>14</sup> A lot of small pieces of buried bones (ill. 3-5) were found in seven pits which were not very deep or large. This factor testifies to the act of cremation of the deceased. These burials usually have an oval shape (14 x 7 m). Besides there were found four burials pointing at partial cremation. There were no bones at all in two small pits, but their shape and orientation point out that these pits are burials (ill. 3-6). A bronze bangle was found in one of these pits (ill. 3-7). This bangle goes back to the end of the 1st and the beginning of the 2nd century AD.<sup>15</sup> And one more square pit was found on the grave and settlement of Poksta II. This pit is supposed to be the trace of the former cemetery church or chapel. In some graves were found charcoals. Researchers consider that the deceased were strewn with them (ill. 3-19). The accumulations of the charcoal on the bones of the deceased were also found on Nikulchino grave. The presence of charcoal is connected with the survivals of the ceremony of cremation.<sup>16</sup> The transition from cremation to the inhumation of the corpses in the grave must have coincided with the conversion to Christianity (IX-X c.) in the most of the Russian principalities. In those regions where the process of changing of the rite of cremation was very slow, the church resolutely fought against cremation, as, for example, happened in the 11-12th centuries in the territory of the Vyatich.<sup>17</sup>

In three cases (Nikulchino I, Emanaevo) the deceased were buried with their knees bent. There are no reasons to consider them ethnic non-Russians, as no other deviations had been noticed in the rite. Some scientists connect such



4. Plan of Emanaevo grave.

1 - borders of excavations; 2 - borders of the lots; 3 - borders of the Talitsk dug holes; 4 - graves with cremation; 5 - graves with partial cremation; 6 - graves-cenotaphs; 7 - graves with inhumation; 8 - double burial; 9 - burials with the legs banded; 10 - burials of skulls; 12 - findings of the ceramics (earthenware).

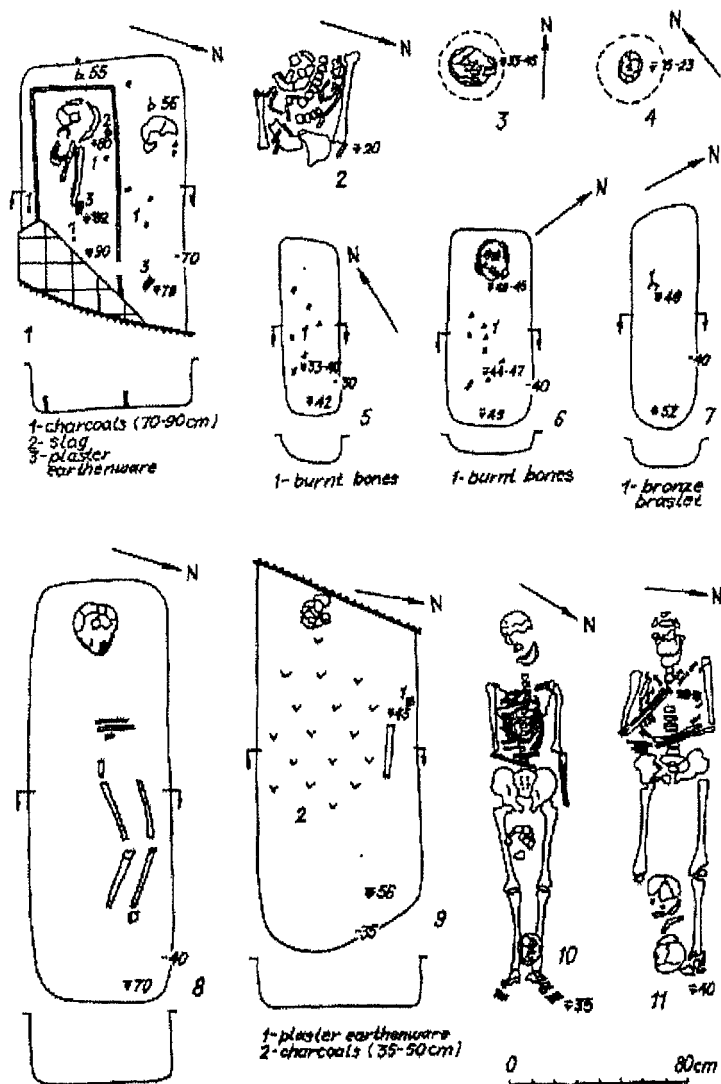


burials with the graves of the witches, as the latter were wrapped up or tied in order to prevent them from further evil deeds,<sup>18</sup> resulting in the above-mentioned position. It has been reflected in folklore and in the materials of the ethnography.<sup>19</sup> As for the Christian rites, all burials are without any accessories, however, such a custom was not followed in the pre-Mongolian period. And already in the 13th century accessories of the dead are rare in the graves, as for example in the cemetery in Yaropolche Zalessky (12-13 c.).<sup>20</sup> On the graves of the Vyatka region there are practically no accessories belonging to the dead. And it was only in the second half of the 17th century when the ceremony of burial in connection with Nikon's reform was put into conformity with real Christianity: the depth of the graves increased (1,5-2,0 m) and metallic neck-crosses appeared.

The co-existence of the Slavic and Finno-Ugric peoples and the system of their world views acquired a compound pagan-Christian character. The Finno-Ugric population preserved its own pagan beliefs, even if they were christianised officially. It was not rare when pagans treated Christians badly. Research made in Perm region proves that once more (Russian coins beginning from the 17th century were found during the works).

Voluntary christianisation has been registered only seldom and as a rule it actually indicates the hope for some benefits. For example, the Udmurts of the Syriansk region of the Slobodsk district received in 1557 benefits for their formal conversion to Christianity and their permit to build a church on their territory.<sup>21</sup> By the account of the Dutch scientist N. Witsen the majority of the Udmurts continued to keep up their pagan traditions even while living near Russian towns of the Vyatka region.<sup>22</sup> P. Luppov supposes that the Orthodox church became more easily acceptable for the pagans after the 1588 reform, which alleviated the situation of the Udmurts in the Vyatka region as well as due to the activities of the monastery and the Vyatka bishopric established in 1657.<sup>23</sup> The peoples of the Volga and Pre-Ural regions were christianised by force, which caused later massive return to the pagan beliefs.

The conflicts of the Orthodox clergy with the pagan peoples were constant. So, an official letter dated 1528 from Vassili III ordered Ivan Karaulov, Mayor of Slobodsk to prosecute the *Skomorokhs* (travelling actors) like runaways and robbers.<sup>24</sup> In the final quarter of the 17th century Iona, Archbishop of Vyatka and Velikoperm, had played an important role in the fight for purity of Christianity. He inspected all the religious festivals and forbade the rites that had any pagan elements.<sup>25</sup> In 1744 Dean Timofei Khlobystor inspected ten churches of the Slobodsk county in order to root out superstitious elements; as a result he found from a local chapel the relics of Saint John the Hermit that were believed to heal people.<sup>26</sup> Analogous superstition, concerning the commemoration day



3 Plans of burials of the ancient Russian graves.

1, 9 - Poksta (55, 56 - burial 1; 9 - burial 2); 2, 10, 11 - Shabalin, 3-8 - Emanaevo.

of St. Mary the Killed in Kukarka, was tried to prove in 1834, but the attempt failed.<sup>27</sup>

The materials analysed by D. Zelenin et al. allow us to suppose that the pagan traditions were widely spread among the Vyatich even at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries. The pre-Christian elements can be traced in the folk calendar festivals that were often connected with church holidays,<sup>28</sup> in cross processions,<sup>29</sup> worship of the places of pilgrimage and of the icons,<sup>30</sup> in various objects (e.g. the so-called Votyak arrows<sup>31</sup> and pendants of icons,<sup>32</sup> relicts of Pre-Christian cults,<sup>33</sup> folklore and other manifestations of superstition.<sup>34</sup> All this was often comfortably connected with the official Orthodox Christianity and it was often regarded an inseparable part of spiritual culture. Repercussions of some traditions are still alive among the inhabitants of the Vyatka region, and these need to be studied and interpreted.

Translated by Kai Vassiljeva

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## THE BEAR FEAST OF THE KAZYM KHANTY

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Linguistically, the Kazym Khanty are a group of the Northern Khanty. Their territory is situated on the right-hand tributaries of the Ob river, in the Beloyarsk region of the Tyumen district.

Between 1988 and 1989, the expeditions of the Novosibirsk Research Centre worked in the aboriginal villages of Yuilsk, Kazym and Amnya of the Kazym Khanty. There they made 70 recordings of both ceremonial and non-ceremonial songs. Ceremonial songs allow us to reconstruct the musical aspect of the bear feast and the traditional world outlook of the Khanty.

Scientists and travellers who have described the everyday life of the Ostyaks (the Khanty) in the 18th and 19th centuries have pointed out the peculiarity of their mythological conceptions and religion. Even as early as in the 17th century, Stephen of Perm made several mission trips to christianise the small nations of Siberia; the Ostyaks, however, managed to keep to their native religion. Unfortunately, the shamanist customs have not survived to our days. The traces of paganism that the Khanty culture bears have been pointed out by several 19th-century ethnographers. There have been detailed descriptions of