

UDMURT *MAD'* SONG: PARADOX OF A GENRE

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ABSTRACT

The genre system of Udmurt folk songs has been researched by scholars many times. The accumulation and publication of new folklore and ethnographic material requires reconsideration of the general concept and definition. The folklore of northern Udmurtia gives interesting material for the study of the origins of some genres and of their interconnections. For example, the researching of the Udmurt *mad'* song genre, which is associated with popular Udmurt and Russian songs today, within the overall context of the Udmurt genre system, and use of comparison materials from the Komi and Ob Ugrians, has led to ideas about the magical character of this genre and its syncretism (the song fairytale, the song riddle, the song dialogue).

KEYWORDS: Udmurts • Besermians • plot songs • *mad'* • drinking songs • song dialogue

The genre originality of Udmurt folk songs was repeatedly the subject of special attention from folklorists, ethnomusicologists and ethnographers (for example, Boikova 1986; Vladykin 1994; Popova 1998; 2004; Vladykina 1998). The accumulation and publication of new folklore and ethnographic material requires a reconsideration of general concepts and definitions. The folk songs of northern Udmurtia give interesting material for the research of genre genesis and interrelations.

The northern Udmurts and the Besermians divide their song material into two basic genre categories: *krež'* (songs with an improvised text consisting of a non-semantic lexicon with alternating semantic inserts) and *mad'* (plot songs). This sort of division seems important, alongside the division into ceremonial or extra-ceremonial genres. In addition, such genre differentiation can't help but effect terminology levels, especially in the sphere of song performance: singers themselves say that, *krež'* *kyrdzalo*, *mad'* *mad'ylo* (*mad'* is performed by singing, *krež'* is performed by telling). Ignorance of ethnic terminology sometimes leads to amusing incidents, for example, during folklore expeditions singers would refuse to 'sing' any plot song when asked, using the term *kyrdzany*, which is usual in southern and central Udmurtia.

For a long time, the attention of folklore specialists has been directed towards the study of *krež'* as the most representative and archaic genre of north Udmurt folk songs. The other song layer, called *mad'* by native speakers, includes at present the last plot songs, which are well-known Udmurt songs, and also an extensive layer of adopted Russian folklore (round dance songs, ditties, romances, etc.). It is surprising that many

of these songs are included in the ceremonial structure. For example, the Russian songs *Tam v sadu pri doline* (There in a Garden in a Valley), *Skuchno mne na chuzhoi storone* (I am Lost in a Strange Land), *Proschajte vse moi rodneye* (Farewell my Dears), *Poteryala ya kolechko* (I Have Lost My Ring), performed in Russian, a popular Udmurt folk song called *Kapi-kap-kapi* (Drop by Drop) and many others are performed during funeral and commemorative rites, recruitment ceremonies untitled *shaivyl mad'* (a Funeral Song), *dzhozhd mad'* (a Sad Song), *köt kurekton mad'* (a Grief Song), *saldat kel'an mad'* (a Send-off Song). Clearly the performance of this late layer of Russian and Udmurt songs in ceremonies is a characteristic feature of modern life.

At the same time, the semantics of the word *mad'* (a story, saga, narration) made scholars think about the other genre meanings of this term. At the end of the 19th century the collector of Udmurt folklore and expert on north Udmurt culture Nikolai Pervukhin correlated Udmurt *mad'* song with fairy tale:

The Votyak name of the song type is actually *mad'on*, but now it is ordinarily called by the shorter *mad'*. At the same time the meaning is fairy tale (more often with the word *vozho*, i.e. *vozhomad'*) and even riddle or parable. In any case the words *mad'on* and *mad'* have a similar root, and thus, in the most ancient notions of the Votyak people, song can obviously be similar to fairy tale, not the opposite as it is in the Russian proverb: a fairy tale is a fiction, a song is a true story. (Pervukhin 1888: 42)

Taking into consideration Pervukhin's opinion, the contemporary researcher of the north Udmurt song tradition Marina Khodyreva has supposed that the word *mad'* "could also designate musical and epic things, or song fairy tales known, for example, in Komi folklore" (Khodyreva 1996: 8). According to Komi folklorists, song fairy tales are ancient and effected by the voice genre of Komi folklore, composed in the form of dialogue. The most typical features of song fairy tales are the followings: an absence of real characters participating in the dialogue (a certain *bobo*, *ruj*, *dzhydzh*, *pan*, etc.), the cumulative character of plot development, an absurd ending, an archaic lexicon, a synthesis of fairy tale genre signs, a song and an exorcism (Rochev 1976: 45, 52, 55, 56, 59). Today, song fairy tales have turned into a genre of children's folklore, although in the past they had a multifunctional character (Rochev 1976: 59). Similar genres, composed in the form of dialogue, can be observed in Udmurt children's folklore:

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| – <i>Gurys' dzhukez kin s'i'em?</i> | – <i>Who has eaten the porridge from the oven?</i> |
| – <i>Makar/Onton s'i'em.</i> | – <i>Makar/Onton has eaten it.</i> |
| – <i>Makar/Onton kytyn?</i> | – <i>Where is Makar/Onton?</i> |
| – <i>Bun pölyn.</i> | – <i>Wrapped in bast.</i> |
| – <i>Bun kytyn?</i> | – <i>Where is the bast?</i> |
| – <i>Tyl sutem.</i> | – <i>The fire has burnt it.</i> |
| – <i>Tyl kytyn?</i> | – <i>Where is the fire?</i> |
| – <i>Vu kysem.</i> | – <i>The water has put it out.</i> |
| – <i>Vu kytyn?</i> | – <i>Where is the water?</i> |
| – <i>Osh yuem.</i> | – <i>The bull has drunk it.</i> |
| – <i>Osh kytyn?</i> | – <i>Where is the bull?</i> |
| – <i>Derie nödem.</i> | – <i>He has sunk into the dirt.</i> |
| – <i>Deri kytyn?</i> | – <i>Where is the dirt?</i> |
| – <i>Kuaka pan'sam.</i> | – <i>The crow has smeared it.</i> |

– Kuaka kytyn?
 – Bad’pu iylyn.
 – Bad’pu kytyn?
 – Tir tshogem.
 – Tir kytyn?
 – Shyr mudem.
 – Shyr kytyn?
 – Inme tubem.
 – Malý tubem?
 – Shyr kules’ nyrtsushet/shuba vyryny
 tyne’s tyd nyrulde tshushyny.

– Where is the crow?
 – On a willow top.
 – Where is the willow?
 – The axe has cut it down.
 – Where is the axe?
 – The mouse has buried it.
 – Where is the mouse?
 – He has risen into the sky.
 – What for?
 – To sew the handkerchief/the fur-coat from
 a mouse skin to wipe your nose.¹

The author Lidia Dolganova (1981; 1996; etc.) describes these dialogues as fables (*vyzhyiaton*) and marks their similarity to counting rhymes (Dolganova 1996: 59). It is also necessary to note their amazing similarity to riddles. As riddles, these fables are constructed with a question-answer structure and are characterised by deep mythological attachment to cosmogony (for example, the characters of the heavenly bull drinking water/rain, and the world river Kama). The archaic lexicon confirms the antiquity of the fables (*pan, s’az’eg, gar*, etc.). Unfortunately, there is little information about the way they can be performed because the tradition has been lost as a functioning genre. However, according to the memoirs of different informants, fables could be played by adults and children in the form of dialogue.

Examples of song dialogues are also fixed in ceremonial genres, for example, as a drinking song in the ceremony of autumn mummery (*pörtmas’kon*):²

– Kytchy vetlid, urome?
 – Tugde bichany oi-a vetly.
 – Kytyn kölid, urome?
 – Kapka kuspady oi-a köl.
 – Ma’e vetlid, urome?
 – N’ylpu da lyste oi-a valy.
 – Main mis’tis’kid, urome?
 – Tshukna us’em lysvuen.
 – Oi-a mis’tas’ky, urome?
 – S’iz’yl us’em bad’yar kuaren
 Oi-a chushki, urome...

– Where did you go to, my friend?
 – You (after all) know, to pick hops.
 – Where did you sleep, my friend?
 – You know, in your gateway.
 – What did you spread, my friend?
 – You know, fir needles.
 – What did you wash with, my friend?
 – You know, with the morning dew.
 – What did you dry yourself with, my friend?
 – You know, with the maple leaves
 that fell in autumn.

– Kytyn kölid, Durie?
 – Kapka s’öryn oi-a köl?
 – Mar val val’esed, Durie?
 – S’yala gon oi-a val?
 – Mar val mindered, Durie?
 – S’yala mamyk oi-a val?
 – Main mis’tas’kid, Durie?
 – Tshukna us’em lysvuen oi-a mis’ky?
 – Main chushkid, Durie?
 – Bad’yar kuaren oi-a chush?...

– Where did you sleep, my Duri?
 – Was it beyond the gate, as I did?
 – What was your bedding, my Duri?
 – Was it the hazel grouse feathers?
 – What was your pillow?
 – Was it hazel grouse catkins?
 – What did you wash with, my Duri?
 – Was it the morning dew?
 – What did you dry yourself with, my Duri?
 – Was it the maple leaves?

(Dolganova, Morozov, Minasenko 1995: 70, 118)

Semantic analysis of these drinking songs and songs fables could be the subject of separate research. We are interested here in when, and how, these drinking songs were performed. In answer to the former question, these songs were performed at Christmastide (*vozhodyr*)³ as songs, using vocal inflection. The sacral periods of Christmastide, as well as the corresponding period in summer (*invozho*), are the winter and summer solstices, times of crises in the annual calendar, times of contact with the other world and with the world of the ancestors. The period known as *vozho* is full of special actions, called to treat the spirits of the ancestors, to stimulate the forces of the earth and the person, to recreate a habitual world order, i.e. to create harmony from chaos. Consequently, telling fairy tales, legends, epic legends about local warriors, as well as asking riddles, are linked to Christmastide in traditional Udmurt culture:

There are such riddles that have a precise time and appointment; they are called *vozho mad'* (riddles of the winter *vozho* or, more correctly, terrible riddles). These riddles are asked from December 25th to January 5th (approximately), i.e. in the transition period of the year, the critical period of winter, and are considered to be riddles with special force. (Gerd 1997: 166)⁴

Today it is not easy to find song fables and dialogue rhymes, in addition to which their folk terminology has not remained. However, the tradition has turned out to be alive: during last folklore and ethnographic expeditions to the Besermians, the tune of the farewell to water, *vu kel'an*, was identified. This text is also based on a dialogue:

луд вы-лэ мь-ни но луд вь-лэ мь-ни но воз'вь-лын возь вь-лын ть-д'ь кис'-пу
 т'я-ь кс'-пу у-лын пэ-рес' дэ-душ-пу-кэ
 мар-та-тын лу-эм мар-ка-рис'-код мон шус'-ко мон-та-тын-пу-кис'-ко
 ма-рэ си-йос'-код шу-ьс'-ко но ко-з'ьл-да-рэд си-ис'-ко кыз'-пу пы-ри-эд сис'-ко
 мы-нам но-ки-иэ но э-въл ма-лы та-тын у-лис'-код
 ма-рэ си-ис'-код ко-тын и-зис'-код гон-льр гу-тё эн-клас'-ко шу-э
 мй-ы дэ-душ... кыз'-пу куар шал'-тыр-тэ лъс-ву-эз вь-лэ ча-пош-йа

*Lud vyle myni no, lud vyle myni no, voz' vylын töd'y kys'pu.
 Töd'y kys'pu ulын peres' d'edush puke.*

- *Mar tatyn luem, mar karis'kod? – mon shuis'ko.*
- *Mon tatyn pukis'ko.*
- *Mare s'i'is'kod? – shuys'ko no.*
- *Koz'iyl darez s'i'is'ko, kyz'pu pyriez s'is'ko.⁵*
- Mynam nokin'e, nokin'e no evyl.*
- *Maly tatyn ulis'kod? Mare s'is'kod, kytyn iz'is'kod?*
- *Gondyr gut'ion kelas'ko, - shue.*
- Möiy d'edush... kyz'pu kuar shal'tyrte, lys vuez vylat chanosh'ya.*

*I went to the meadow, I went to the meadow, and there is a silver birch in the meadow.
There is an old man sitting under the silver birch.*

- *What has happened? What do you do? – I ask.*
- *I sit here.*
- *What do you eat? – I ask.*
- *The fir tree bark I eat, the birch catkins I eat.*

I have nobody.

- *Why do you live here? What do you eat, where do you sleep?*
- *In the bear den I sleep – he says.*

The old man ... The birch leaves rustle, throwing the dew upwards.

(Popova 2004: 211–212)

By content, this text is similar to a drinking song, although here one of the participants in the dialogue is given a real identity: a bear, whose name in the Udmurt language is taboo and is replaced by *byd'zym d'ad'a* (the great old man), *peres' atai*, *moiyy atai*, *moiyy d'edush* (the old father/grandfather), *pas'kyt kymys* (wide forehead), *pas'kyt pyd* (wide paws), etc. This appeal, to a creature from the strange forest world and, probably, a totem and a family patron, can also be found in drinking songs.

The last example is valuable because it gives an idea of the character of vocal performance. The tune is performed in the improvised manner of the *krež'* and is based on two linked melodic motifs within the intervals of a fifth and a third. Maria Alekseyevna Ponomareva, a talented singer and performer of Besermian folk songs, has improvised some song variants of the farewell to water,⁶ each one differing in melody and text. Judging by performance style, these tunes are akin to *krež'* (the author of the record, ethnographer Yelena Popova, has also identified them as such; see Popova 2004: 205–225). However, it is curious that Maria Alekseyevna found it difficult to indicate a genre for the tune:

Ponomareva: Tan' ma'e mad'ylo val.

Popova: Oтын, ben-a?

Ponomareva: Ben.

Popova: A muket dyr'ya taoste kyrdzalo na, ug ni-a?

Ponomareva: Ug gine. T'in' so yö kel'an dyr'ya taiz mad'ylo val.

Popova: A so krež'-a lyd'yas'ko ta?

Ponomareva: So... olo so krež', olo mar so. Mad'ylo val. Olo krež', olo mar so luele val.

Ponomareva: These examples were sung by telling?

Popova: There, yes?

Ponomareva: Yes.

Popova: Was it singing at other times of the year or wasn't it?

Ponomareva: It wasn't. But during the farewell to ice these examples were sung by telling.

Popova: Is it krez'?

Ponomareva: It is... I am not sure what it is... It was sung by telling... Maybe it is krez' or something else...

(Recording from the private sound archive of Y. Popova.)

The singer's confusion is obvious. The text does not contain the auxiliary lexicon typical for *krez'*, there are clear plot outline and dialogue, and the heroes of the narration are unusual. It seems the fairy tale is sung. The probable calendar timing of this text to a spring ceremony of the farewell to ice is casual, as the theme of the farewell to water, an appeal to the owner of the water, typical to other songs, is absent here. A case of two genres mixing (*krez'* and *mad'*) is rare enough in the song culture of the northern Udmurts and Besermians (the performer herself couldn't identify the genre precisely), but it is indicative.

Let's apply this to the song tradition of the Komi. While investigating the Izhmo-Kolva epos, Anatoli Mikushev found a close relationship with some improvisational songs of autobiographical character, called *nurankyv*, which "in the course of their oral history were full of epic elements and fabulousness, and became lyric and epic songs, or more often the fantastic epos" (Mikushev 1972: 130). An example of *nurankyv* entitled *Me kud vylyn pukala* (I Am Sitting on a Box) was transcribed by him from singer F. E. Chaklinova, who called her improvisation *moidigmoz s'ylem / moidigmoz nurem* (Singing/*nurankyv* in a Fairy Tale Manner) (Mikushev 1972: 130). It is typical for singers on the Vychegda and the Vym' rivers to define some epic songs as, "a fairy-tale that can be sung", or as, "a song fairy tale, a fairy tale that is sung, and only a normal fairy-tale" (Mikushev, Chistalev 1993: 269; Mikushev, Chistalev, Rochev 1995: 229).

Song fairy tales can also be found in the genre system of the Ob-Ugric people. According to the researcher Galina Soldatova, the vocal-narrative tradition presented by *mos' ar* (song fairy tale) and *arang mos'* (fairy tale performed by singing) is connected with the narrative folklore of the Synya Khanty. In the folklore of the Kazym Khanty this genre is designated as *mon'ch ar*, and in Mansi folklore as *ergyn' moit* (Mazur, Soldatova 1997; Aksyanova et al. 2005: 174). Soldatova made the following interesting remark on performing style in Synya Khanty song culture: "the same piece (*mos'*) can be executed both in a spoken manner, and in song [...]. Strictly speaking, sung execution of fairy tales is not actually singing. It is a kind of recitative, close to both singing and speech. It is different in different examples." (Aksyanova et al. 2005: 174)

The etymological analysis of the terms *mad'* and *mad'yiny*, corresponding to *moid* in Komi, and *mos'/monch/moit* in the Ob-Ugric language, was made by Tatyana Vladykina, who has identified the word root in many Finno-Ugric languages; the meaning is "to guess, to solve, to conjure, to speak" (Vladykina 1998: 43). That magical character of the Udmurt *mad'* was underlined by its link to sacral transitive time. Thus, it is possible to assume that the Udmurt *mad'* song genre could be a certain syncretical genre of song fairy tale, song riddle and song dialogue, which was probably performed in a melodic and declamatory manner as a special recitative. The basic stress lay on the magical recitation of words. The transformation of this genre into an epos by augmenting the plot, noted in Komi folklore, is also not excluded. In any case, the tendency to semantic fullness, even narration, presented in the *mad'* genre, was realised in transferring and fixing

this term to a later layer of Udmurt, and then Russian, plot songs that have practically nothing in common with the fundamental principle.

NOTES

1 The text was written by Alevtina Kamitova in 2007. She was born in Saraikino village, Grakhovo Rayon, Udmurt Republic, in 1976.

2 See Khodyreva 1996: 54; Pozdeyev 1987: 122–123; Churakova 2006: 141, etc.

3 This word is also translated as “the time of changing” (Glukhova 2002: 26). For more on the etymology of the word, see *vozho* (Pletneva 1999: 248).

4 In 2002, in the Krasnogorye (Krasnogorsk) Rayon of Udmurt Republic, we recorded the term *vozhokyl* to denote a riddle: *vozho* + ‘a word’, i.e. ‘a sacred word’ (the field records of Irina Nurieva and Aado Lintrop).

5 The text under the musical notation and that of the transliteration are different in the original source.

6 Udmurt spring holiday *vu kel’an* (farewell to water) or *yö kel’an* (farewell to ice) is celebrated after the melting of snow, usually in April.

SOURCES

Field records of Irina Nurieva and Aado Lintrop.
Private sound archive of Yelena Popova.

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