Pars II

Summaria acroasium in sectionibus et symposiis factarum

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AUSSERLICHE BEZIEHUNGEN
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MYTOLOGISCHE ANGABEN


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Syktyvkar
SYMBOLIC CLASSIFICATION
OF TREES IN KOMI
TRADITIONAL WORLD VIEW

Ethnic culture of the Komi people is that one in the row of North-Eastern Europe cultures, where a tree is the main and available material from the ancient time. It is normally that the most typical sorts of trees (their images) are leading symbols in sign systems of these cultures.

Komi traditional world view had symbolic classification of tree sorts worked out clearly enough. It was depended on both natural features of trees (practical experience on their use in construction and craft, in folk medicine), and on mythological notions about their characteristics and origin (it defines the use of certain tree sorts in rituals and magic practice in many respects). It is noteworthy that symbolic arboretum row includes not only trees, grew in this climate zone, but also images of trees, which presented only in folklore texts of the Komi people (for example, oak, cypress).

Typical opposition for mythological arbo retum of Finn-Ugric peoples as "coniferous-leaves bearing trees in traditional Komi world view presents by such representatives as "fir-tree -birch" (variant: fir-rowan-tree). In this case, fir-tree image is connected with autumn-winter period and notions about The Death Tree, and image of birch - with spring-summer period. Also the latter id considered to be holy, "solar" tree.

Image of pine is in "neutral" position in symbolic row of trees. In Komi mytho-poetic notions it plays the role of "stairs" or The World Tree.

According to the Komi beliefs, fir-tree,
poplar and bird-cherry tree, grown on the house territory, exercise negative influence on man. It is considered that fir-tree takes living force from lodgers of the house; poplar takes family happiness; if a bird-cherry tree put out its roots under the house – someone in it will die soon. In some cases a bird-cherry plays the role of symbolic border with the other world – the Komi people have tradition to commemorate their dead men near a bird-cherry tree, grew in farm yard. There also were incidents, when babies were buried under a bird-cherry tree on the farm yard.

As a rule, trees with certain features were used as amulets-protectors. For example, pine resin root with strong tone smelt; red rowan berries with bright color; or pine-needles of juniper with bactericide characters.

In Komi folklore symbolic classification of trees is in clear conformity with color asymmetry. Often, images of trees are representatives of corresponding colors. So, fir-tree (or fir) attribute is dark blue color; birch one – "gold"; bird-cherry tree – "black"; rowan tree – "red," etc. Analysis of folklore and ethnographic data shows that in symbolic color classifications of the Komi people "dark blue" color correspond to "exhaustion", "dryness," "death"; black one is connected with "the North", "misfortune", "disease"; red and gold is considered to be solar colors.

If one examines arboretum symbolic of family and calendar rites of the Komi people as well as analyses the choose of tree sorts for some ritual constructions (for instance, large Easter swing), he can see that the Komi people may decript with the arboretum code not only static, but also dynamic features of mythic model of the world.

It should be also noted that traditional stereotypes in perception of various tree sorts are preserve, but, as a rule, without mind, among present carriers of Komi ethnic culture.

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CHILD IN SOME IDEAS OF VEPSIANS

The report is the first attempt to generalize the data referring to the problem of children symbolism of Vepsians, i.e. the system of ideas and images that helped Vepsian traditional society to comprehend the period of life of a person from birth to full age as well as feature and traits that were attributed to the representatives of this period of age.

The Vepsian age terminology distinguished 4 periods of a person's life: childhood (läpsaig), youth (nored päiväd), mature age (matoriaig), old age (vanhuz, rouhuz). Children were divided into 3 groups of age: infants, younger children (from 1 to 8–10 years of age) and teenagrs (from 8–10 years of age to 14–15). In addition to general notion laps, a Vepsian child had other names depicting his phisical growth as well as his position in society: vagahaine – baby, dubitus – a baby beginning to stand on its feet, kăpas – a baby beginning to walk, etc.

Vepsians, like many peoples of the world had the idea of the vital strength of a child and its growth, they considered the first teeth and the beginning of walking as the most important stages in the physical development of an infant.

The rites in which children were the obligatory participants and the rites from which children were deliberately removed are analysed. The reasons, why children participate in these rites turned out to be closely connected with the people's ideas of the specific nature of childhood. The study of the fortieth day rite showed that Vepsians as well as many other people had the notion of an infant in his first years of life as creature connected with the world of forefathers and, consequently, having prophetic capabilities for a certain period of time. The idea of a child as a immature, informed creature explains the reason of his removal from the rite of a first new year visitor.

Vepsians are not known to have the rites signifying the transfer from childhood to youth. In the author's opinion, this period of