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*Magic vocabulary in Bashkir*

ACCORDING TO the beliefs of the Bashkir people, a certain demon, Osok (*Osoĕ*) by name, was the most dangerous one, in that this demon brought about a large number of different diseases. In particular, the Bashkirs imputed rashes and patches on tongues and lips, epilepsy, sty and conjunctivitis, women's diseases and sterility, bladder inflammation and so on to Osok's evil-doing.<sup>1</sup>

In the south-eastern regions of Bashkortostan, Osok was thought to be a female creature—half spirit and half flesh. She was supposed to inhabit some "bad spots," namely the still back-waters of rivers and lakes, cross-roads or refuse pits where ashes, bones, rags and other waste products were dumped. On picking up something in these places, falling down, or stepping upon an object, a person might be caught by Osok and fall ill.<sup>2</sup> The disease caused by Osok's invasion into one had to be treated through a special magical procedure only, the *osoĕlau*.

The ritual of *osoĕlau* had several variations among the Bashkirs. The simplest method was to throw some clothes of the sick person into a river, pit or cross-road at sunset. As informants from the Uchaly, Burzyan, Abzelilovo and Beloretsk districts report, in order to get rid of a disease, healers, called *osoĕso*, made a doll, kept it close to the patients

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1. *Kartoteka tolkovogo slovarja*.

2. Field records of 1989–90 in Beloretsk, Abzelilovo, Uchaly districts of Bashkortostan.

for three days, and threw it in "bad spots" together with ashes and pieces of bread.<sup>3</sup> A similar procedure was observed among the Bashkirs of the Samara area<sup>4</sup> and reported too by M. Kulaev<sup>5</sup>. It should be noted however that in different regions two dolls were also used, and tea, chaff, bones or the patients' nails might be used instead of ashes.

In "treating" female sterility the ritual of *osoqlau* was applied in a modified form. As one of the informants says, in this case "people at home killed a sheep, made a blood-spot on the forehead of the sick woman, and beat her with still warm dirty guts. Afterwards the guts and stained clothes were taken away in a bucket and left on the river bank."<sup>6</sup>

A particular method of *osoqlau* was recorded in the village of Maksyutovo (Kugarchy district, Bashkortostan). In order to get rid of such diseases as herpes or scabies, a healer first put a wet rag on the sore and then pressed it against the ground. The procedure was accompanied with prayers, sometimes in Arabic, sometimes in Bashkir, and was repeated three or seven times.<sup>7</sup>

Still another ritual of *osoqlau* by means of a black hen was reported by G. Däulätšin and Š. Gabdiev. According to them, a black hen would be killed for exorcizing the demon. Then a healer carried it around his patient's head, hitting it with it lightly and repeatedly while saying "Küs, küs, küs!" ("Go away, move to another place!") Finally, the hen was taken away with the words "Come with me to pay a visit," thrown into a pit or buried at an intersection of seven roads.<sup>8</sup>

Generally, the exorcism sounds as follows:

*Osoq bulbay — osop kit, tauzan kilhäñ — tauğa kit, taştan kilhäñ — taşka kit, kayzan kilhäñ — şunda kit. Bıl bañırza neyeñ bar, yar astında öyöñ bar. Bar kit, os! Mine küp etläney, inde himez keşegä bar, yomşaq tüşäklegä bar!*<sup>9</sup>

3. *Ibid.*

4. *Kartoteka...*

5. *Naučnyj arxiv*, file 3, inv. 13, dep.

317.

6. *Ibid.*

7. *Kartoteka...*

8. DÄULÄTŠIN 1963; field records by Š. GABDIEV, *Kartoteka...*, inv. 63, dep. 2, pack 12: 21.

9. *Kartoteka...* (Orenburg Oblast, Kuvandy district, village of Tiryakly).

If Osok you are, fly away! If from the hill you are, go back to the hill! If from the rock you are, go back to the rock! Wherever you may be from, go back there! What is the poor wretch to you? You have a place of your own just by the precipice. Go away, fly away! You have tormented me for so long, now go to somebody else who is fat and has a soft bed to lie in.

This exorcism, or a part of it at least, is known from many regions of Bashkortostan. Moreover an almost uniform ritual is observed when returning home after the exorcism of Osok. The following rules should be kept: (1) one was not allowed to glance backwards, and it was strongly recommended (2) to come back in a roundabout way, (3) to drop in three houses when passing by, (4) to stay at intersections as long as possible, etc. The Bashkirs believed that diseases would not be cured if the rules were broken.

Thus the evidence shows that the Bashkirs attributed many diseases to Osok. Almost everywhere they resorted to the ritual of *osoklau* in treating them. The main point of the ritual was that a doll, an "ongon", should be made for the demon "to move into." Sometimes the demon might enter a black hen, or patients' clothes or something else. Together with magic actions, *osoklau* was accompanied with spoken exorcisms. Osok was driven away into the ground, the water or to the wind in accordance with the Bashkirs' ideas about the demon's place of residence.

In the Bashkir language the word *osok* is used not only as the demon's name, but also to designate any objects that were thrown away after the magic ceremony—a doll, a hen, clothes, etc. Thus, the demon herself and her representations where the diseases are meant to enter are called by the one and same word *osok*. This word is the root for *osokso*, *osoklausı* (a healer who exorcizes the demon), *osoklau* (the ritual of exorcism).

Besides, there exist the words *osonou*, *osongan*, which relate to diseases of supernatural origin as well. Rashes and patches on lips and tongues, and in some regions on bodies as well, are called *osonou*. For example, (1) *dänem osonop sıga la kısıy* (a rash breaks out and itches); (2) *irenem osongan, telem osongan* (patches

on the lips, patches on the tongue).<sup>10</sup> The Bashkirs thought that the disease *osonou* resulted from the demon's kiss. That is why the following exorcism was applied: *Telem osongän, telem osongän, besäy artın üp, [pff!, pff!], hayran telem hur buldı, hur buldı, hur buldı.*

It is interesting to note that in the *Drevnetjurkskij slovar'* the word *uçuk* is recorded with the meaning "rash" or "patch on lips;" the same dictionary includes the word *uçuk elpik* ("fever") with the element *uçuk*.<sup>11</sup> In modern Turkic languages the word *uçuk* can be found in Azeri, Turkish, Turkmen, Kirghiz, Uzbek, Uighur, Kazakh. It is also found in Tadjik.<sup>12</sup> The word has the following basic meanings: (1) blisters, blebs, rashes on lips (with chills, fever, and high temperature); (2) blue marks on a body caused by infected blood or a disturbed circulation; (3) a blotch on the lips; (4) a small ulcer; (5) sores; (6) a slight headache with rashes on the face; (7) epilepsy; and (8) bladder inflammation.<sup>13</sup>

It should be noted that in the Kirghiz language the word *uçuk* forms a part of such compound denominations as *kayrı uçuk*, an abscess to be treated by searing, *kurçak uçuk*, "tuberculosis", *ak uçuk*, a "white" disease (?).<sup>14</sup> There is also an ethnographic term *uçukta* in Kirghiz that means "to apply vapor-therapy" by splashing water on red-hot iron, "to scare, to frighten somebody with something," "to get to know something by asking questions."<sup>15</sup> The Turkmen-Chovdurs also call a sacrificial animal used in shaman seances *uçuk*.<sup>16</sup>

The word *uçun* too is found in many Turkic languages. The primary meanings of this word and its phonetic variants are "to fall into an epileptic fit," "to be frightened suddenly and let forth a scream," "to break out (as regards rashes)."<sup>17</sup> In the Tatar language the word *oçan* is used with the meaning of "children's stomach-ache (or rather belly-ache)."<sup>18</sup> The same

10. *Naučnyj arxiv*, file 3, inv. 13, dep.

317: 32-52; *Kartoteka...*

11. *Drevnetjurkskij slovar'*: 604.

12. MURADOV 1975: 118.

13. SEVORTJAN 1974: 616.

14. JUDAXIN 1965: 812.

15. *Ibid.* 813.

16. BASILOV and NIJAZKYČEV 1975: 133.

17. *Drevnetjurkskij slovar'*: 616.

18. *Tatar telenej aňlatmalı süzlege*: 484.

children's illness is called *ösyän* (word for word: "three souls") in Bashkir.

Thus, all the linguistic and ethnographic data considered in this paper lead to the following conclusions: (1) the word *uçuk* with the meaning of "a disease" can be found in many Turkic languages, being a possible phonetic variant of the Bashkir *osoĥ*; (2) the diseases denominated with the words mentioned above are generally similar both in Bashkir and in other Turkic languages. Hence, it can be supposed that there is one and the same word as well as one and the same concept—a spirit of illness—among the Turkic peoples. According to E. V. Sevortjan, the stem of the words *uçuk*, *uçun* is derived from the verb *uĥ* ("to appear").<sup>19</sup> In this case the Bashkir words *osoĥ*, *osonou* have the verb *os* ("to appear, to rise, to fly out") as their stem too.

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