

VOTIAN VILLAGE FEASTS IN THE CONTEXT OF RUSSIAN ORTHODOXY

ERGO-HART VÄSTRIK
PhD, Head of Estonian Folklore Archives
Estonian Literary Museum
Vanemuise 42, 51003 Tartu, Estonia
e-mail: ergo@folklore.ee

ABSTRACT

This article* considers Votian village feasts that evidently belong to the sphere of Christian folk religion. Village feasts are analysed as expressions of collective activity in pre-industrial rural society that enclosed certain religious, social and economic functions. This phenomenon of celebrating collectively certain days of church calendar, which included ritual activities in village chapels or other local sanctuaries, common meals and heavy drinking as well singing and dancing in the course of 3–4 days, was a part of common Russian Orthodox tradition shared by several ethnic groups throughout North-West Russia in the second half of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century. Despite the fact that this phenomenon was familiar to the wider community of Russian Orthodox believers, there were obviously certain local characteristics and variation typical to Votian tradition. However, Votian village feasts are studied in the article in the context of Russian Orthodoxy, without favouring assumed pre-Christian elements of the Finno-Ugric religions.

KEYWORDS: Votians • Christian folk religion • folk calendar • village feasts • Russian Orthodoxy

INTRODUCTION

The survey on village feasts among Votians¹ is based largely on the materials from the manuscript collection “Votian ethnology” (*Vadja etnoloogiad*) compiled in 1932–1980 by the recognised Estonian linguist and folklorist Paul Ariste (1905–1990).² Valuable comparative material from the first half of the 20th century was found from the folklore archives of the Finnish Literature Society (SKS KRA, collections of V. Alava, E. Enäjärvi-Haavio, M. Haavio, A. and L. Laiho, J. Lukkarinen, S. Paulaharju, M. Virolainen) and publications of the linguists (J. Lensu, J. Mägiste) providing sample texts on Votic language. In order to outline dynamics in the formation of village feast tradition, descriptions of Orthodox feasts from the 18th century, available in the protocols of Holy Synod in St. Petersburg and works by early scholars of Votian culture (Fr. L. Trefurt, F. Tumanski), will be compared with folklore accounts.

As a result of Soviet anti-religious policies, village feasts began to lose significance in the end of the 1930s and therefore Votian informants of the post-war period recall these festivities as one-time phenomena of the past. The Second World War brought

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along brutal changes in the life of the native inhabitants of the region that caused the collapse of many institutions of traditional culture, including village feasts. Yet, in some places, for example, in Luutsa (*Luzhitsy/Лужичи*)³ that maintained its indigenous population after the war, village feasts were celebrated up to the end of the 1960s. Developments in post-socialist Russia in the 1990s led to the re-establishing of the institution of local village feasting in somewhat secularised form in this particular village since 2000. This tradition has been revived on the initiative of the local museum as well as villagers themselves, which can be regarded as the manifestation of rising ethnic consciousness⁴. For this reason the final part of the article concentrates on the comparison of the functions and structure of the village feasts in the pre-industrial period and that of the revived village feasts in Luutsa.

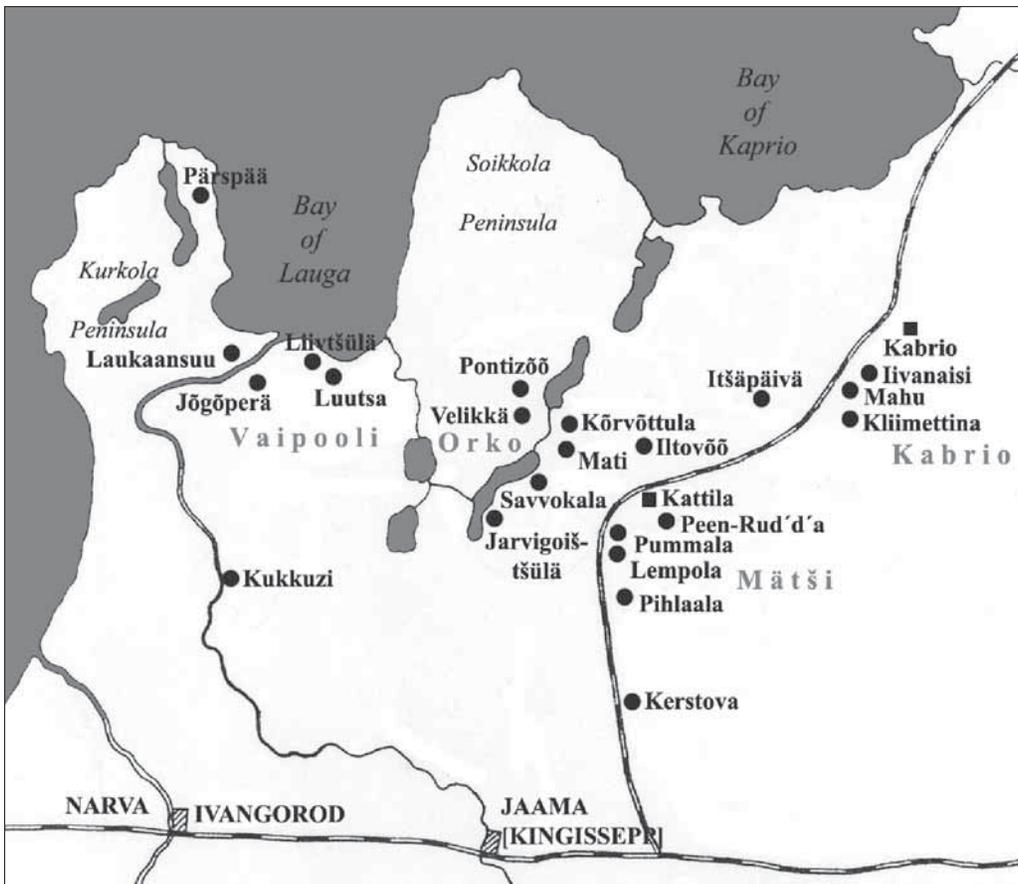


Figure 1. Map of Votian (and Izhorian) villages mentioned in the article.

Ethnic history of Votians has been described mostly as the story of assimilation and vanishing. This has been the key-motif in many surveys and research papers discussing the fate of this small Baltic-Finnic ethnic group residing in the present-day Leningrad district, North-West Russia⁵. Detailed demographic survey, by the geographer Peter von Köppen (1793–1864) in the middle of the 19th century, documented the number of Votians to exceed 5,000 and according to later scholarly estimations this figure had gradually lessened⁶. According to the Russian census of the year 2002, the number of people who identified themselves as Votians was 73. Today the Votic language can be heard in few villages on the coast of the Lauga Bay (*Luga Bay/Лужская губа*) that are endangered by the continuous enlargement of the Ust-Luga Port.

Among many reasons that have furthered the process of ethnic assimilation the impact of the Russian Orthodox Church has been frequently underlined⁷. According to historical sources and archaeological data Votians' relationships with Novgorod State was intensified in the second half of the 13th century, which in all probability brought along the wider acceptance of Eastern Orthodoxy by various layers of the Votian community (see Nazarova 2001: 187–188; Ryabinin 2001: 137–139). As written sources about the process of Christianisation are missing, we do not know to what extent Votians accepted the new faith at that time. Obviously, at first the church institutions determined formal involvement into the congregations and acceptance of certain Christian norms. Missionary activities were evidently strengthened in the beginning of the 16th century when the Votian territory had fallen under the rule of Great Duchy of Moscow. At that time Votians had partly taken over the nomenclature of Eastern Orthodoxy and the frequently cited “pastoral letters” of Novgorodian archbishops demonstrate the mixture of Christian and non-Christian elements in the ritual practices shared by the peoples of the region⁸. It is obvious that at least in the middle of the 17th century when Votians were under Swedish crown control they identified themselves already as true Russian Orthodox believers and opposed endeavours of Swedish officials to change their faith (cf. Väänänen 1991: 86–87; Västrik 2007: 74–93).

The Russian Orthodox Church has been described to be the institution that homogenised cultural as well as linguistic differences in its sphere of influence. Furthermore, it has been stated that joint church services in the Old-Slavonic language, led by Russian-speaking priests, supported the emergence of common Orthodox identity and shadowed the genuine ethnic self-identification (Ernits 1996: 195; Heinsoo 1996: 339). That is the reason why Votians identified themselves easily with Izhorians and Russians who shared the same faith. Marriages within the congregation, i.e. between Votians, Izhorians and Russians, were favoured, excluding at the same time closer relationships with Finns and Estonians of Lutheran denomination (cf. Tsvetkov 1925: 41–42). In general, Russian Orthodoxy formed an important aspect of the Votian identity at the beginning of the 20th century making them reticent towards the initiatives of the scholars who were encouraged by recent discoveries of the Finno-Ugric studies.

These ideas were vividly reflected in the 1920s by Dmitri Tsvetkov (1890–1930), the schoolteacher of Votian origin studying at the University of Tartu, who was deeply pessimistic concerning the future of the Votic language and endurance of ethnic consciousness, following thus the elaborated discourse on vanishing. According to Tsvetkov,

Russian Orthodoxy “determines the entire existence of Votians: their moral quality and world view, spiritual attraction, necessity to belong to the family of Finno-Ugric peoples, their sympathies and antipathies. /---/ Greek Catholic⁹ creed has obviously drawn under its influence the whole Votian people with its boastful form of customs; /---/ They merged conclusively with Greek Catholic creed. All other ways and forms of religion are not accepted” (1925: 41). In this manner Tsvetkov too emphasised Russian Orthodoxy as an important aspect that has shaped the mentality of Votians, but on the other hand, “miraculously the same feature has interfered their original essence and world view” (ibid.: 42). Thus, Tsvetkov points out the ambivalent character of Eastern Christianity in the formation of Votian identity, however, without attributing to it a negative meaning.

The overwhelming presence of Russian Orthodoxy in Votian folk religion, and folk culture in general, has not been fully taken into consideration by the international community of researchers, who have concentrated more on highlighting pre-Christian elements in the Votian religion. Finnish and Estonian scholars, taking the most active role in the study of Votian culture, have valued and searched for more archaic traditions of the distant past, thus trying to pick up “scattered remnants” and to reconstruct one-time religious phenomena free from late Christian influences.

Aforementioned Votian scholar Dmitri Tsvetkov, the single figure among local intellectuals in the field of humanities, represented quite an opposite perspective in his study on Votian customs related to birth, weddings and funerals. He stressed the fact that the world view of Votians was based on Orthodox Christianity and therefore this was the most suitable point of departure for the study of Votian folk culture (Tsvetkov 1931–1932: 53). I find Tsvetkov’s approach, described above, attractive for my own research project on Votian folk religion where my aim is to study the religion of Votians as it was (and is) “lived” by ordinary lay people. This form of religion has been characterised as folk, popular or village Christianity, the last term evidently referring to the rural environment of Votians’ pre-industrial society. Votian religion can be considered as a type of religious syncretism that unites elements of different origin, thus containing evidently a variety of non- or pre-Christian elements that have been inherently combined with Christian notions. In addition, this phenomenon embraces popular interpretations of Christianity, certain rituals and practices that can be seen as adaptations of Christian liturgy into peasant environment. It is not possible neither to draw strict borderline between various beginnings nor to create hierarchies of importance or distinguish clearly succeeding stages of development. These phenomena were evidently formed in the synergy and should be analysed as integrated entities.

VILLAGE FEASTS IN RUSSIAN ORTHODOXY

Fruitful background information for the study of Votian village feasts in the second half of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century was provided by the study of American church historian Vera Shevzov “Russian Orthodoxy on the Eve of Revolution” (2004). Her research that concentrated mostly on the religiosity of Orthodox laity in the period following the emancipation of Russia’s serfs in 1861 showed convincingly how the number of village feasts increased considerably as a result of these important

reforms in peasant life (Shevzov 2004: 143). It is even possible to suggest that the village feasts as independent manifestations of communal worship were institutionalised at that time in many places of Russian empire, including its North-West corner inhabited by Orthodox Izhorians and Votians.

According to Shevzov (2004: 142) local village communities established such feasts entirely on their own initiative and at the end of the 19th century the correspondents of Tenishev Bureau¹⁰ frequently reported at least two or three such feasts per village. Shevzov drew clear borderlines between general Christian holidays, parish feasts¹¹ and the category of village feasts, which unlike their more established analogues “continued to manifest the dynamism of liturgical life in Russia right up to the 1917 revolution” (Shevzov 2004: 143). These days were held in highest esteem and people who had left for urban areas often returned for their celebration. Great popularity of village feasts meant that general Christian holydays and practices were adapted and assimilated by lay believers in a way that made sense in their local worlds (ibid.: 131).

Examples provided by the researcher showed that the reasons behind the establishment of local feasts varied from place to place. In her study Shevzov emphasised repeatedly the religious motivation for the establishment of village feasts suggesting that similarly to cases of chapel construction these feasts were established whenever and wherever a community felt a divine intervention in their lives: “Often believers established them on the day of a saint whom they considered to have exerted his or her protection over the community during an epidemic, fire, or other natural disaster. Believers hallowed the day the event occurred and celebrated what was commemorated on the general Orthodox calendar on that day as their own special feast.” (ibid.: 143).

Among common features of the village feasts, several days of preparation, before the actual feast day including fasting, cleanup efforts, the preparation of special foods and brewing beer, should be mentioned. In some localities, a specially chosen peasant supervised the preparations for the festivities (ibid.: 144). Village feasts might have incorporated a Divine Liturgy delivered on the day of the feast in the parish church or if the village had chosen not to have liturgy in the church the priest was asked to carry out a prayer service in the village. On both cases a procession from the parish church to village was carried out that was considered by the researcher to be the most characteristic feature of local feasts (ibid.: 145)¹².

In her book Shevzov (2004: 147) outlined the general description of the village feast day relying on the materials from the Vologda diocese. The entire community greeted the procession, including the feast day icon, when it arrived in the village and the main scene for following procedures was either the village chapel or a partitioned area in the middle of the village where clergy conducted a general service for the blessing of waters. Then the entire village along with the clergy took part in the blessing of the fields where different prayer services were held. In addition, the blessing of common pasture was carried out where peasants drove their cattle and horses for blessing. This was followed by personal prayer services in peasants’ homes and a common meal shared by all villagers and clergy. According to these descriptions guests and relatives arrived from neighboring villages to join the common meal and festivities after the clergy and the icons had left for the parish church.

Shevzov drew attention also to two features of village feasts, the issue of work and the consumption of alcohol, which were targets of criticism in the writings of the time.

These topics were heatedly debated as opponents referred to too many local feasts that lessened considerably the number of working days as well as heavy drinking typical of days off from work in Russia (see Shevzov 2004: 151ff.). This question manifested the conflict between the tradition oriented peasantry and the business interests of landowners and state officials. Surprisingly, these ideas – long feasting period and drinking – came to the fore as characteristic traits in the descriptions of Votian village feasts. The above-mentioned two aspects were frequently referred to in many texts recorded by various folklore collectors that seem to reflect stereotyped patterns of local value judgments.

Almost in all Votian texts brewing and drinking of beer, variety of prepared nourishments and a long feasting period in the company of relatives and visitors, was underlined. Village feasts were referred to in these texts frequently with a common term *prāzņikka* ‘feast, festival, holiday’. Specific vernacular term in this context was *Žlut-prāzņikka* or *олут-прāzņikka* (also *ривнои прāzņikka*) ‘beer feast’ that pointed directly to preparing and consuming of beer. In a few cases celebrations were titled as *Žlut-pühāpāivā* ‘beer Sunday’, *vusv2 pühāpāivā* ‘the Sunday of the year’ and *čūlā prāzņikka* ‘village feast’. In times when the local feast corresponded with the parish feast the terms *prestolnži* or *zaprestolnži prāzņikka*, derived directly from the Russian clerical term *престольный праздник* ‘patron saint’s day’, were used.

Votian village feasts followed largely the patterns sketched above by Shevzov. Folklore accounts refer to both official religious practices carried out by the clergy as well as manifestations of popular Christianity, including various rites in the village environment.

VOTIAN VILLAGE FEASTS IN THE CONTEXT OF ORTHODOX CALENDAR

More descriptions about village feasts came from these Votian regions that were better documented by the folklore collectors. We can also realise that in these villages were celebrated annually 2-3 or more feasts that were connected with icons, and corresponding patron saint days, in local village chapels or parish churches. For example, in parochial center Kattila (*Kotly/Комлы*) the annual village feasts were *strečēnii* (< *Сременение Господне* ‘Presentation of Lord’; 2./15.02)¹³, *kurol’o* (< *Иван Купала* ‘St. John the Baptist’; 24.06/7.07)¹⁴, *tuli-mārja* (‘St. Mary of Fire’; 15./28.08)¹⁵, *spāssa* (< *Снас Маккавей* ‘Maccabee the Saviour’; 1./14.08)¹⁶ and *talvi-mikkula* (‘St. Nicholas of Winter’; 6./19.12)¹⁷. It is important to mention that the local parochial church, dedicated to St. Nicholas the Wonderworker, celebrated on the lastly mentioned day the parish feast. According to oral tradition there were several chapels in Kattila that might have dictated the dates of local village feasts in the settlement. This is also reflected in local microtoponymy: for example, the Midsummer feast day is fixed in the name of a small water body *kurol’o bruda* ‘the pool of St. John’ located near the village (Ariste 1969: 16).

In neighbouring villages Lempola (*Ranolovo/Ранолово*) and Pummala (*Pumalitsy/Пумалицы*) annual feasts were held on *vērissē* (6./19.01)¹⁸, *troittsa* (< *Троица* ‘Trinity’)¹⁹ and *pokrova* (< *Покров Пресвятой Богородицы* ‘Cover of the Holiest Virgin’; 1./14.10)²⁰. On *troittsa* and *pokrova* holy processions were held from Kattila church to these villages and the priest blessed the spring and stone crosses, dedicated to Prophet Elijah, situated in the middle of Pummala (Mägiste 1959: 109–110)²¹. The nearby village of Pih-



Photo 1. Village chapel in Pihlaala where the feast of *nastassia* was celebrated.
Photo by Erik Laid 1942. VE VII (41).

laala (*Pillovo/Пиллово*) was well known for the annual feast of *nastassia* ('St. Anastasia'; 29.10/11.11)²², which was celebrated in the local chapel of St. Anastasia at the verge of the village. Relying on many accounts in folklore collections, this feast was celebrated by the inhabitants of many close villages who came on *nastassia* to the chapel and a holy spring next to it.

In so-called Orko ('Valley') village group, which belonged to Kattila parish too, local feast days coincided only partly with afore-mentioned holidays. In Kõrvõttula (*Korvetino/Корветино*) village feast days were *kurol'o* (24.06/7.07)²³ and *kūzma* (< Кузьма и Демьян 'Sts. Cosmas and Damian'; 1./14.11)²⁴. Celebrated feasts in Mati (*Mattia/Mаттия*) village were *tševäd-jürtši* ('St. George of Spring'; 23.04/6.05)²⁵ and *talvi-jürtši* ('St. George of Winter'; 26.11/9.12)²⁶ as in this village was situated a chapel dedicated to St. George. The neighbouring Savvokala (*Savikino/Савикино*) village celebrated two feast days of St. Nicholas – *tševäd-mikkila* ('St. Nicholas of Spring'; 9./22.05)²⁷ and *talvi-mikkila* (6./19.12). In Pontizõõ (*Pondelovo/Понделово*) annual feast days were *pädrä* (< Петр и Павел 'Sts. Peter and Paul'; 29.06/12.07)²⁸ and *mīχχала* ('Archangel Michael'; 8./21.11)²⁹. Lastly mentioned holyday and *troitsa* were celebrated as the village feasts in Jarvigoištsülä (*Babino/Бабино*). *Troitsa* and *iliä* (< Пророк Илия 'Prophet Elijah'; 20.07/2.08)³⁰ were village feast days also in Ildovõõ (*Индово/Ундово*).

Lesser data is available about local feasts in Kabrio village group as folklore collectors visited this area considerably seldom. In these villages, local feasts were connected

with the churches in the parochial centre Kabrio (*Koporie/Konopbe*). The patron saint day of the parish church was *tuli-mārja* (15./28.08) while the other church, situated in the ruins of a medieval castle, celebrated the feast day on *spāssa* (1./14.08). Importance of the lastly mentioned holyday is reflected in microtoponymy – people from nearby villages and pilgrims valued on that day water from *spāsā lähe* ('Spring of the Saviour') that was located next to *pāsimātši* ('Hillock of the Saviour'); in addition sanctity of this complex near churches was marked with the icon of Virgin Mary (Ariste 1969: 111, 115). Holy processions were carried out on these feasts from one church to another and stops were made next to the holy spring and hillock. In the nearby Votian village Itšäpäivä (*Icipino/Иципино*) *tuli-mārja* was celebrated also as village feast where festivities were carried out in the local chapel. A village feast, including brewing beer and activities in the chapel, was celebrated in Itšäpäivä also on *talvi-jürtši* (26.11/9.12).



Photo 2. Village chapel in Luutsa where the feast of pokrova was celebrated.
Photo by Gustav Ränk 1942. ERM, Fk 1049: 32.

In Vaipooli village group, which belonged to the sphere of Soikkola (*Soikino/Соикино*) parish, village feasts were connected with patron saint days of the churches in Soikkola and Jögöperä (*Krakolie/Kpakoľbe*)³¹. Both of the churches were dedicated to St. Nicholas the Wonderworker and consequently *talvi-mikkula* (6./19.12) was celebrated as the parish feast day in Jögöperä and village feast in Luutsa. Another feast day of St. Nicholas *tševäd-mikkula* (9./22.05) was the annual feast in Liivtšülä (*Peski/Песку*) that was celebrated with a procession to a coastal chapel (*rantā tšasovna*) near the village. All these three villages also shared another common feast, *pädrä/pedro* (29.06/12.07). The third annual feast

in Jõgõperä was *χlāri* (< Φλορ u Λααρ ‘Sts. Florus and Laurus’; 18./31.08)³² – a typical feast day for the villages with churches as the traditions of this day included consecration of horses with holy water near the church (cf. Öpik 1970: 110, 156–157). A third important feast in Liivtsülä and Luutsa villages was celebrated on *pokrova* (1./14.10) which was the patron saint day of the village chapel in Luutsa. On that day, too, a holy procession was carried out from the parish church to the chapels in these villages³³. Well-known were also in Vaipooli villages some of the feast days in nearby Izhorian villages: *spāssa* (1./14.08) in Laukaansuu (*Ostrov/Ocmpos*) and *nastassia* (29.10/11.11) in Pärspää (*Lipovo/Lunovo*). People from several neighbouring villages attended the feast in Pärspää as the chapel in this village – alike in Pihlaala – was visited in order to guarantee good luck for their sheep. On *spāssa*, holy procession from the Jõgõperä church was carried out to the Lauga River where the priest consecrated the water of Lauga and all the participants swam in the river.



Photo 3. Parish church dedicated to St. Nicholas the Wonderworker in Kattila.
Photo by Jüri Metssalu 2006.

It is evident that village feasts in the territory of Votians were connected closely with official Orthodox calendar, churches in parish centres, village chapel and other local sanctuaries. These feasts – one of them usually in spring or summer and the other one in autumn or winter – were on the one hand included into the set of common Christian practices and on the other hand adapted with the needs of local community. Archive accounts reflect obviously to certain archaic traits in the structure of the feasts in the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century that can be interpreted in the light of descriptions from the 18th century and parallels of neighbouring peoples.

BEER FEASTS AND VOTIAN BRATTŠINAD

Accounts about village feasts in folklore collections are quite brief and laconic. Below are some short sample texts recorded by various researches that describe Votian village feasts in the first half of the 20th century:

“*Pedro* (29.06/12.07) was our feast. Then all men brewed beer in every house. Every housemaster did it. House was cleaned before the eve of *pedro*, women heated sauna. Sauna was leaved when church bells started to ring. Young and old, everybody attended church in the evening. And then returned home. Lot of people were in church, but next day there would be even more. Everybody went to church in the

morning and there was lot of people, so that half of the crowd was on the churchyard. When the service ended, everybody came home. And then it was time for a lunch. Everybody ate their lunch, had a rest for a while and then girls and boys went to make merry in the village. We had large bridge in the middle of the village. Everybody gathered on the bridge. Then girls sang there. Boys came, played *garmoshka*, girls started to dance. Then boys and girls danced there. Old men joined the company, boys joined the company, walked from house to house. They feasted three days, celebrated *pedro*." (SKS KRA, M. Haavio, 2792 < Vanaküla < Jõgõperä, Daria Lehti 1936)³⁴

"On the day of *vērissē* (6./19.01) The church was attended in the morning and in the evening the feast started. People came to visit from the other villages by foot and on horseback. If this was a patron saint day of the church a ram was butchered, vodka was brought, beer brewed and fish prepared, everything that was available. The feast lasted three or four days." (VE I 7 (5) < Lempola, Solomonida Kuzmina – P. Ariste 1942 = Ariste 1969: 13)

"Our *jürtši* feast (23.04/6.05) is a holyday of the chapel. Beer was brewed in all homes. Vodka was brought as much as anybody had money. Then vodka was bought; who brought two gills, who brought a pint, four gills of vodka. Nobody worked, feast lasted three days. Boys and girls, men and women came to visit our village. And then there was feast, people sang and danced. In Votic language these people, our people, did not sing. Old women sang in Votic." (< Mati, Piotra Boranov – J. Mägiste 1943 = Mägiste 1959: 45)

Brewing of beer was evidently one of the most characteristic traits of Votian village feasts of the time. Beer can be considered in the context of village feasts as a traditional ritual drink, and it was brewed in all households and shared with others outside the domestic sphere. Kegs with newly brewed beer were taken also to the local chapels where priests blessed the vessels. Common drinking within the chapel or in front of the building followed the blessing ceremony. Below are two sample texts about village feasts that were celebrated on 26.11/9.12., which reflect obviously different stages in the development of tradition:

"On *sütšüzü-jürtši* ('George of Autumn') there is a feast Sunday in Mati village. Days of yore, common beer for the village was brewed there and it was then taken to the local chapel to "consign". When the priest came and blessed the beer, it was started to drink and beer was portioned to everybody in line. The rest was taken home and was shared between different households." (SKS KRA, V. Alava XII, 508 (184) < Kattila, Sonia, wife of Johorka 1901)

"We had *talvi-jürtši* as a beer feast. Beer was brewed in all households, even if there were only two people. Pies were made. Pies and beer was taken to the chapel. And there it was drunk. Before it was prayed. There were long benches. Pies and beer in bowls were put on these benches. When village elder finished [the prayer], he said: "Congratulations for the feast". Then beer was offered to others: "Taste my beer!" Pies were ripped apart for a meal and shared with beggars. Sometimes five to six days were celebrated, but four days all the time was feasted. There were lot of people, so that village was overcrowded." (VE I 235 (21) < Itšäpäivä, Aleksandr Andreiev 1942 = Ariste 1969: 138)

The bowls with beer were taken along to later common gatherings in the open air that followed religious ceremonies. Traditional site for dancing and singing on feast days in many Votian villages (Jõgõperä, Kukkuzi, Luutsa) was the bridge uniting the two “ends” of the community. When all the villagers celebrated *χlāri* (18./31.08) in Jõgõperä the keg was taken also to the bridge where beer was commonly consumed (SKS KRA, M. Haavio, 2795 < Väikylä, Anna Bussina-Kivisoo 1936).

Beer was traditionally brewed also on some other well-known holydays of the Orthodox peasant calendar, such as *tševäd-jürtši* (23.04/6.05), Easter and *īliä* (20.07/2.08), celebrated almost in all Votian villages. In some places village feasts coincided with special community feasts, named *brattšinaD*, *brāšinaD*, *klattšina* (derived from Russian terms *братчина* and *кладчина*) or *vakkov2* (Izhorian *vakkove*) that shared evidently several common elements, including communal brewing and consuming beer³⁵. Below is the text concerning this kind of feast in Kõrvõttula recorded by Paul Ariste in a neighbouring village:

“*BrattšinaD* were not held in our village. But it was celebrated in Kõrvõttula village on *īliä*. Beer was brewed, vodka was brought and pies were baked. Some more food was prepared. All villagers gathered, women and men, old and young. Then some people from other villages came too. Everybody gathered together. Table was taken to the grass and benches were placed there. Everybody sat at the table. Village elder or the person who was the eldest shared vodka and the other one shared beer. It lasted one day. There was lot of beer. Malt for the beer was brought. Money was collected from everybody.” (VE I 133 (7) < Mati, Timofei Morozov 1942 = Ariste 1969: 107–108; Haavio 1963: 96)

In addition to similarities, folklore accounts refer to certain differences between village feasts and the institution of *brattšinaD*. In some places these feasts were celebrated on other holidays or even dates that were not marked in Orthodox calendar³⁶. In addition, *brattšinaD* were clearly feasts for the closed village community or even certain gender groups within it (only men or only women) and outsiders were not allowed to participate in celebrations. The notion mentioned in connection with *brattšinaD* that only residents of a particular village took part in these feasts did not concern customarily village feasts. In few cases, certain restrictions were mentioned that at the start only residents of the home village attended the feast and visitors from other places joined them later in the evening or even next day. Sometimes these limitations concerned the last day of the feast – only local men attended this “day of hangover” while other people had to start off for their home villages. If the same feast was celebrated in neighbouring villages the usual pattern was following: at first all the people gathered in one village and later everybody moved to feast in neighbouring village.

Differences between these two phenomena were manifested also in preparations for the events. In case of *brattšinaD* often the fact that common beer for the whole village community was brewed was mentioned: malt for the beer (or money for buying malt) was gathered from all members of the community and in the course of festivities this beer was shared with all participants of the feast. Developed communality is visible in the fact that village elder or some other respectable person in the community portioned the beer of *brattšinaD*. All these aspects of communality were much weaker in the accounts about village feasts. A somewhat different modality is manifested in the de-

scriptions that let us know that preparations were made individually in all households and everybody took their newly brewed beer and food to common meal sheared by all members of the community. Many of the texts about village feasts from the middle of 20th century did not stress developed communality but refer to a variety of traditional cuisine prepared for the feast and attain attention to a long period of feasting in the company of relatives and other acquaintances.

At the first half of the 20th century the *brattšinaD* institution was not known evenly in all Votian villages. These feasts were remembered as the one-time festivities that belonged evidently to the past. However, in certain villages, situated in remote areas, these celebrations were maintained up to the turn of the century. One of the most documented feasts of this kind was celebrated in Jarvigoiššülä on *iliä*. The venue of the feast was a local sanctuary situated at the edge of the village. At the beginning of the 20th century when several Finnish folklore collectors visited the site they described an old "log building" (*salvos*) without a roof, ca 8,5 metres long and ca 3 metres wide, that contained several old trees and their stumps, an icon attached to one of the trees as well as a stone cross³⁷. The feast dedicated to Prophet Elijah was celebrated within and next to this complex. In 1901, a local village woman Haritinia described the general structure of the festivities to folklore collector Vihtori Alava as following:

"Beer was brewed for the village a *kul'a*³⁸ or two. Then everybody from all houses went to this log building to pray the Lord with candles. Food (a plate) was prepared and bread was baked and butter was added to the plate in order to pray the Lord. Common meal was held next to the log building, kind of tables were put there and everybody ate (this bread and butter or even took some food home). The master who had brewed beer (one household brewed for the whole village) poured from the keg. Everybody sat on the benches in the row and drank beer. This lasted about two hours, then people from other villages came to drink (that beer, together)." (SKS KRA, V. Alava XII, 292–293 (87) < Jarvigoiššülä 1901)

Folklore collector Samuli Paulaharju, who visited the site ten years later and even happened to participate in the feast, was told that candles were taken to the stone cross inside the building, beer was poured next to the cross and some people even placed there some coins (Paulaharju 1919: 101). *BrattšinaD* in this site were remembered also in the end of the 1920s when the Soviet linguist Jakov Lensu worked in the village. He was told that people of two neighbouring villages gathered to the feast, both men and women, who sang and danced there together for several days (Lensu 1930: 252–254). The lastly mentioned aspect was again common with village feasts that boasted with long period merriment.

BEER FEASTS IN THE 18TH CENTURY DESCRIPTIONS

Parallels to the abovementioned cult practices can be found from descriptions available in the court protocols of the Holy Synod in St. Petersburg dealing with the superstitions of local peasants in the 1730s. These documents provide the earliest detailed records about Orthodox feast days in several Votian villages, including among others Liivtšülä and Luutsa (cf. Västrik 2007: 94–116). Surprisingly in these descriptions one can also

realise variations in the structure of the feasts indicating evidently different layers in the feast tradition.

For example, in the year 1733 peasants of the Liivtšülä village were accused of brewing the beer of *brattšinaD* (Russian *брашинское пиво*) near the old wooden cross³⁹ where on the day of Sts. Peter and Paul (29.06/12.07; cf. *pädrä/pedro* above) the icon of these saints was taken and a prayer meeting was held. Candles were lit and Yuri Ignatiev, who was leading the meeting, poured newly brewed beer onto the icon. The rest of the beer was consumed collectively and a common meal with cheese, butter, pies and beer was held in the local chapel “that was built without sanction” (PSPR VIII: 169–170; Lavrov 2000: 137–138).

Similar descriptions can be found in the protocol from the same year concerning peasants Dementii and Semen Klementiev from neighbouring Luutsa village. As stated by the scribe, there was a wooden cross in Luutsa too where the feast of Prophet Elijah was celebrated: a ram, or sometimes an ox was slaughtered there and beer of *brattšina* (*пиво брашинское*) was brewed on the spot. Cultic practices resembled to those carried out in Liivtšülä: candles were lit in front of the wooden cross and icons, prayers were read and beer was poured on the cross (PSPR VIII: 171; Lavrov 2000: 139–140). A somewhat different element was the celebration of the day of Archangel Michael (8./21.11; cf. *mīχχала*) when according to the protocol Klementiev with comrades had lit candles in front of the cross and icon, prayed to the Lord and then “everybody poured their beer on the cross” as well as placed bits of foodstuff brought along next to it (PSPR VIII: 171; Lavrov 2000: 140). These accounts reveal that also at that time for certain feasts common beer was brewed while for the celebrations of other feasts beer was prepared by the villagers separately.

According to the 18th century documents, brewing of beer on the feast days and soaking the icons of the feast day with it was well-known popular tradition that belonged also to the set of practices related to the feast of Sts. Florus and Laurus (18./31.08; cf. *χlāri*). This notion was vividly documented in the descriptions of the scholars who introduced Votians to the wider circle of readers at the end of the 18th century. Both the Baltic-German pastor from Narva, Friedrich Ludolph Trefurt, and Russian historian, Feodor Tumanski, published descriptions of the feast of *Chlar/Xlap* that included common gatherings near the cross dedicated to these saints, in a chapel or a larger threshing barn, offering beer to the icons three times, common meal and feasting for three days under the control of specially appointed supervisors (Trefurt 1783: 16–18; cf. Öpik 1970: 110–112).

Russian historian Aleksandr S. Lavrov (2000: 136–137, 142–143) has pointed out the idea that according to the documents from the 17th and 18th centuries the practice of brewing beer for the religious feasts was accepted by the clergy as these sources refer to utensils for brewing beer among the inventory of local chapels and mention local keepers of the chapels as the main organisers of the feasts. Beer feasts attained the attention of the Holy Synod in these cases when non-Christian elements became prevailing in celebration or peasants violated certain norms from the perspective of religious officials. It is possible that in the cases mentioned above inadmissible was the fact that lay persons were leading religious rituals, without priests participating, which gave them the possibility to interpret and adapt Orthodox practices beyond the canonical norms. One of such practices that might have called forth the attention of clergy was the act of pouring beer on the icons that was interpreted as sacrilege.

Village feasts of the second half of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century evidently shared several common elements with *brattšinaD* and celebrations of the Orthodox feasts of the 18th century. It can be suggested that the institution of village feasts, in the Votian areas, was formed on the basis of these earlier festivities, acquiring in the course of time independent status.

VILLAGE FEASTS AND BLOOD SACRIFICE

One more aspect of village feasts that linked this phenomenon with the *brattšinaD* institution and earlier descriptions should be discussed in order to complete the comparison started above.

18th century documents refer often to the slaughtering of livestock (a rooster, a ram or an ox), sharing it with the members of community as well as pouring blood of the slaughtered animal, especially that of roosters, onto the crosses, stones and trees in local sanctuaries on Christian feast days. According to the explanations of local peasants, fixed in the protocols of the Holy Synod, this was done in order to guarantee good luck for the whole village community for the season to come (cf. PSPR VII: 511–514; PSPR VIII: 137–139; 170–172; cf. Trefurt 1783: 16–18). The majority of these accounts, about slaughtering an ox or a ram, were related with the celebrations of the day of Prophet Elijah (20.07/2.08), but the slaughtering of a rooster was practised in connection with several other feast days. More detailed description of the celebration of the day of Prophet Elijah, including the slaughtering of a ram, is available in the article by Trefurt:

“Dem Propheten Elias (*Ilja prorok*) zu Ehren, in welchem sie den Beschützer ihrer Heerden und besonders ihrer Schaaf verehren, wird gleichfalls ein jährliches feyerliches Fest in dreyen auf einander folgenden Tagen gefeyert, davon jedoch nur der erste Tag gottesdienstlich begangen wird. An oder vielmehr zu selbigen wird von ihnen ein ganz weißes Schaaf, welches auch nicht den geringsten Flecken haben muß geschlachtet und gemeinschaftlich von ihnen verzehret. Zu dieser Absicht haben sie fast in allen ihren Dörfern von einiger Bedeutung ein eigenes Haus oder vielmehr eine Ort von Capelle, in welchem diese festliche Mahlzeit gehalten und sich einige Obros (Bilder der Heiligen) befinden, vor denen sie Wachskerzen anzünden. An den Seitenwänden dieses kleinen Gebäudes aber stehen die Biertonnen, welche, ehe der Anfang mit Ausleerung derselben von ihnen gemacht wird, eingeseegnet werden.” (Trefurt 1785: 105–106)

Researchers agree that this kind of slaughtering and common sharing of meat is a survival of a one-time blood sacrifice that was known to many ethnic groups of the region (Öpik 1970: 133; Zelenin 1991: 383–384). In Votian folklore texts, reflecting mostly the traditions of the second half of the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century, these practices were remembered vaguely in connection with the celebrations of *iliä* and *brattšinaD*. For example, J. Lukkarinen wrote, in 1909, an account that the villages of Pummala, Lempola and Pihlaala had slaughtered a common ox on the day of Prophet Elijah (SKS KRA, J. Lukkarinen, 1909). According to V. Alava (1901: 83) the bones of the ram that was slaughtered on the day of Prophet Elijah were taken to the stone crosses, dedicated to the saint, which were situated in Pummala. These crosses were remem-

bered as the site where beer was collectively consumed on *iliä* (Mägiste 1959: 69). It is evident that in the middle of the 20th century, this complex had lost its cultic meaning but P. Ariste's informant Solomonida Kuzmina said in 1942 that bones were taken to these crosses whenever an animal was slaughtered and meat jelly was prepared (VE I 26 (64) < Lempola). Thus, while analysing the descriptions we can follow also the process of desacralisation of certain practices as this was the case with celebrations of village feasts in general.

A ritual slaughtering of a rooster on certain feast days was remembered in rare cases also in the beginning of the 20th century but obviously these accounts concerned one-time practices of the past. According to the description of J. Lukkarinen, made between 1910 and 1911, a rooster was slaughtered next to the old birch tree, known as *iliä kahtši* ('Birch of Prophet Elijah'), on the eve of Archangel Michael (8./21.11; see *μιχαλα* above) in Jarvigoistšülä and blood of the rooster was poured on the roots of the tree (SKS KRA, J. Lukkarinen, 1160).⁴⁰ Similar knowledge about one-time sacrifices at this site on the day of the village feast was passed to S. Paulaharju (1919: 101–102) few years later. At the end of the 1920s, an 82 year-old Yelena Artemieva from Jarvigoistšülä still knew the tradition, despite the fact that she did not remember the specific feast day of the village: "In the middle of our village there was a high birch tree. The birch was old-aged. People went to pray there. If anybody was not well then a coin of money was taken there. Prayers were held at night in order to avoid other people to see it. There was an annual feast day when a rooster was slaughtered." (Lensu 1930: 254) Here, too, we can see the process how this particular practice was earlier connected with the celebrations of the village feast day but in later accounts only the fact of slaughtering was remembered and offerings were related with healing and believers' personal well-being.

In a somewhat symbolical sense blood sacrifices were institutionalised and preserved in connection with the celebrations of *nastassia* (St. Anastasia; 29.10/11.11) in Pihlaala and Pärspää. St. Anastasia was venerated as the patron saint of sheep in popular Orthodoxy of the region and therefore local feasts in those villages included the blessing of wool, feet and heads of sheep that were brought along to the celebrations. This was done inside the local chapel or in front of it and later these offerings given to the priest leading the blessing ritual or shared with beggars. The feast was acknowledged as "the feast of sheep"⁴¹ and it gained great popularity among peasants far and near who carried out quite long journeys from their homes to the chapels in these villages. Accents in folklore accounts on the feast of St. Anastasia varied too, depending on the viewpoint of the informant. Local people described the general process of the feast, including preparations at home and service in parish church, while visitors, or even pilgrims attending the feast, concentrated on the activities in and next to the chapel. In both cases "promises" were made in order to gain good luck for sheep and other species of livestock.

"The day of *nastassia* in Pärspää. People were in the chapel on the eve of the feast, wool of the sheep was taken there and it was given to the priest. Those whose sheep did not thrive – if anybody had charmed with words or with bad sight – promised earlier to bring wool to priest. On the day of *nastassia* other people went to the chapel. There was lunch after the service in the parish church; the priest walked from one house to another and blessed homes. The feast was started after the service. Four days were celebrated on *nastassia*. Everyone brewed *nastassia* beer

at home if this was possible.” (SKS KRA, M. Virolainen, 571 < Liivtsülä < Pärspää, Fiokla Nikolaieva 1944)

“*Nastassia* was the day of sheep. We slaughtered sheep then. The heads of sheep were taken to the chapel in Pihlaala for the priest and beggars. The priest blessed the heads and then these were shared with beggars. A promise was made that I’ll bring the sheep. And you brought the head of the sheep if sheep did not thrive.” (VE I 96 (31) < Kattila, Anna and Irina Antonova 1942 = Ariste 1969: 130–131)

In Pihlaala, likewise in many other villages, small water bodies were included into the set of religious and cultic practices. Therefore some of the texts in folklore collections refer to the fact that the products brought along for blessing were taken to the spring next to the chapel. In these cases this kind of offering was interpreted as a healing procedure, thus conjoining communal endeavour to guarantee good luck in cattle breeding as well as person’s individual well-being.

CONCLUSION AND COMPARISON WITH REVIVED VILLAGE FEAST IN LUUTSA

The majority of the descriptions above reflect the importance of religious aspects of traditional village feasts shared with the former *brattšina*-institution as well as Orthodox parish feasts. Notions and practices of different origin were adapted with each other in this phenomenon within the framework of the Orthodox calendar. These festivities evidently addressed the well-being of the village community as a whole and its individual inhabitants. This was achieved with the help of popular rites and treatments as well as through the Christian practices and blessings carried out by the clergy. Different religious beginnings manifested in these celebrations were inherently associated with each other without causing divergence in the community of believers. On the other hand, descriptions, available in historical sources and folklore archives, reveal certain dynamics in the development of the phenomenon, concerning mostly the dimension of communality in ritual practices.

Highly developed communality of village feasts was manifested in preparations for these celebrations as well as in common meals carried out inside or next to the chapel during the feasts. Descriptions, that refer to common slaughtering of an animal or a common beer brewed for the feast, including references to collecting money for these activities and collective consumption, seem to represent more archaic patterns of communal cooperation. More recent developments brought to the fore individual aspects of ritual activities that also characterise generally this phenomenon in the sphere of Russian Orthodoxy in the second half of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century.

We can see that religious aspects of the village feasts were closely connected with social facets of these celebrations. It is evident that village feasts fastened ties between relatives and continuously reproduce cohesion within the community as it provided a framework for intensive social interaction within the community as well as between neighbouring villages⁴². Knowledge about feasts of nearby villages belonged to the common heritage shared by the people of the same village group. In some places village

feasts acquired, in addition, certain economic functions. For example, in Kattila, annual parish fairs were held on *tuli-märja* (15./28.08) that increased the variety and range of participants in these festivities.

According to the recent field materials, based on participant observation in 2003–2004, the religious aspect is missing almost entirely in the case of the revived village feast in Luutsa. The feast was re-established in 2000 by the hostess of the local private museum Tatiana Efimova in order to celebrate the 500th anniversary of the village – first written records about Luutsa were presented in the Novgorodian land register of the year 1500. The feast entitled *Лужицкая складчина* has been celebrated on the second weekend of July that largely corresponds with *pädrä*, the day of Sts. Peter and Paul (29.06/12.07), which was the traditional village feast day in Luutsa. Since 2001, the celebrations have taken place in the traditional site of the village feast – the yard of the Efimov family in the middle of the village where up to the 1960s was situated the local chapel.

However, the structure of the feast is for the most part different as instead of a prayer meeting and holy procession the central place is acquired by the lay formation, a kind of gala led by the hostess of the local museum. The programme has included speeches by district officials and the village elder, lectures about history of the village and its inhabitants, performances of villagers, folklore groups and invited musicians, as well as common memorial procedures to commemorate losses in war and repressed community members. In a somewhat symbolic sense the religious aspect of the event was indicated in 2003–2004 by the erection of a temporary wooden cross on the former site of the village chapel where an icon was placed and candles were lit in the course of memorial procedures⁴³. Nevertheless, the local community has opposed organisers' initiatives to ask representatives of the clergy to participate in the event. That obviously reflects results of Soviet anti-religious policies and present-day relationships between majority of villagers and the local clergy.

Traditional patterns of village feasts came to the fore in the informal part of the feast including a common meal in the company of guests, villagers and their relatives who come to visit them on this particular day. Traditional food was prepared for the meal that was taken along by all participants and shared on long tables. Communal eating and drinking, beer was substituted with wine and strong alcohol, was accompanied by spontaneous singing and dancing, representing the mostly well-known Russian rep-



Photo 4. Wooden cross and icon at the site of the former village chapel in Luutsa where the village feast was celebrated. Photo by Madis Arukask 2003.

ertoire. Informal parts included games between the kin groups and the visit of *tšudi* (*чуду*), the group of oddly dressed and masked villagers, representing traditional institution of mumming that was re-actualised spontaneously by elderly villagers.



Photo 5. Luutsa village feast in 2004. Participants of the feast follow the performance of the local folklore group. Photo by Kirsti Ruul.

In addition, Luutsa village feast can be seen in the context of rising local identity and intentions for acknowledging Votians as an independent ethnic group⁴⁴. The feast has provided possibility to support self-consciousness of Votian inhabitants in Luutsa and neighbouring villages. This was manifested in the speeches of guests and participants, Votian folk songs and poems presented by the folklore ensembles, booklets on the ethnic history of Votians and collection of Votian folk tales distributed to the villagers in the course of the feast (see Ernits 2006; Heinsoo 2006: 234). In addition Votian national symbols, worked out recently by the group of enthusiasts, were introduced to the wider public in 2003 within the programme of the village feast. Thus, the institution of village feasts has been used in a revitalised form for reproducing ethnic consciousness and has been included into the process of Votian nation-building. This is a part of the strategy of local enthusiasts to oppose the discourse of declining replicated in scholarly works and public opinion.



Photo 6. The visit of tšudi at the Luutsa village feast in 2004.
Photo by Kirsti Ruul.

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NOTES

1 Also ethnonym Votes has been used in scholarly literature; cf. German *Woten*, Russian *водь, вожане*, Finnish *vatjalaiset*, Estonian *vadjalased*, Votian *vaddalaiz2D, vadjakkoD*. Basic facts about Votians and their language see, for example, Viikberg 2001; Matsumura 2001; Heinsoo 2004.

2 This unique collection is housed at the Estonian Folklore Archives of the Estonian Literary Museum. Partly texts on village feasts were published in Ariste 1969, which is the seminal publication on this phenomenon in Votian tradition.

3 Here and below Votic variants of the place names are used in the text; contemporary Russian forms of same toponyms are added in brackets (both in Latin alphabet and Cyrillic). On Votian onomastics, see Ariste 1967.

4 I am indebted to Tatiana Efimova, initiator of the local museum, who shared information about the revived village feast in Luutsa and hosted the research team of the Estonian Literary Museum in 2003–2004.

5 See, for example, Ojansuu 1906: 2; Tsvetkov 1925: 41–44; Kettunen 1930: 1–4; Konkova 1992: 71–76; Ernits 1996: 203; Heinsoo 1996: 342. On the paradigm of loss in folklore studies see Anttonen 2005: 48–61.

6 Statistics on the number of Votians and Votic speakers see, for example, von Köppen 1851: 70–73; 1867: 20; Heinsoo 2004: 10, Viikberg 2001.

7 Discussion on this topic, see Ernits 1996: 193–196; Heinsoo 1996: 338–339.

8 More information on these sources, see Mansikka 1922: 226–229; Kirkinen 1987; Siikala 2002: 211–212; Västriik 2007: 44–73.

9 This is the term used in Estonian literary language in 1920s to denote Russian Orthodoxy. In his original manuscript in Votic, Tsvetkov used the term *venäi uzgo* ‘Russian faith’ (Tsvetkov 1931: 60).

10 Materials of the Ethnographic Bureau of Prince V. N. Tenishev, gathered in 1896–1899, are housed in the Archive of the Russian Museum of Ethnography in St. Petersburg.

11 “A parish feast day commemorated the day of the saint or event in honor of which the altar of the parish church was named (usually corresponding to the name of the church itself). If a parish had only one church with one altar, it would celebrate only one parish feast day. /---/ These feasts, each lasting two or three days, were celebrated with vespers on the eve and the Divine Liturgy on the day of the feast and were often better attended than the standard major holy days.” (Shevzov 2004: 140)

12 According to Shevzov (2004: 145) processions are from a historical perspective “one of the most elusive aspects since, like the construction of chapels, they were often not recorded or registered, even in parish records”.

13 The full title of the Orthodox feast is the Presentation of our Lord and Saviour in the Temple. Here and below vernacular forms of the feast days in Votic, typed in phonetic transcription of Paul Ariste, are used in the text (see variants in Ariste 1969). In case the Votic term is derived directly from Russian equivalent the term in Cyrillic is added in brackets after the sign “<”. English translation of the vernacular term is given between quotation marks. References to official terms, based on Averintsev 1993–1995, Mitrokhin 1994 and *Pravoslavnyi* 2006, are provided in footnotes. Dates of the feast days according to Julian and Gregorian calendar have been added.

14 Midsummer day is celebrated in the Christian calendar as the birth of St. John the Baptist. In Russian Orthodoxy this day is known as *Рождество Иоанна Предтечи* (‘Birth of John the Forerunner’).

15 This day is commemorated in Eastern Orthodoxy as the Dormition of the Theotokos (*Успение Пресвятой Владычицы нашей Богородицы и Приснодевы Марии*) in order to mark the “falling asleep” or death of Mary, the mother of Jesus. In Roman Catholic calendar the same day is celebrated as the Assumption of the Virgin Mary.

16 This is one of the three feasts called *спас* (< *Спаситель* ‘Saviour’) in Russian Orthodox calendar celebrated in August. The first of the feasts commemorates seven holy martyrs Macabees, their mother Solomonida and teacher Eleazar (*Семь святых мучеников Маккавеев: Авим, Антонин, Гурий, Елеазар, Евсевон, Адим и Маркелл, мать их Соломония и учитель их Елеазар*) who fought against the rule of Antiochus IV Epiphanes in the 2nd century B.C.

17 The feast of St. Nicholas the Wonderworker (*Николай Чудотворец*) commemorates the death of the 4th century Bishop of Myra.

18 Russian vernacular term for the feast is *водокреща* or *водокреши* referring to the blessing of the waters that was carried out on that day by the nearest body of water. Official name of the holiday in Orthodox calendar is *Святое Богоявление. Крещение Господа Бога и Спаса нашего Иисуса Христа* (‘Holy Epiphany. Baptism of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ’) marking the revelation of Jesus Christ as the Messiah and second person of the Holy Trinity at the time of his baptism.

19 English equivalents of the feast are Pentecost and Trinity Sunday. Official title of the feast in Russian Orthodoxy is *День Святой Троицы* ‘Day of the Holy Trinity’.

20 Official name of the feast in Russian Orthodoxy is *Покров Пресвятой Владычицы нашей Богородицы и Приснодевы Марии* that commemorates the revelation of Holy Virgin in Constantinople in the middle of the 10th century when, according to Christian legend, she gave her shawl to the believers praying in the cathedral.

21 It has to be mentioned that a chapel was located next to the spring and stone crosses of Prophet Elijah that evidently had impact on the cultic practices carried out there (see Ariste 2005: 28; cf. Alava 1901: 83; Mägiste 1959: 69). According to the recent field recordings there was a chapel in Lempola village too, but this fact was not documented in earlier folklore collections.

22 The feast, officially celebrated by the Russian Orthodox Church as the day of *Преподобно-мученица Анастасия Римляныня* 'Pious Martyr Anastasia from Rome', was widely recognised in the region as the feast securing the well-being of sheep (see Ariste 1969: 127–134 and below).

23 In folklore collections no references can be found about village chapel in Kõrvõttula, but well known was the *күпол'о кайво* 'St. John's well' where certain prayers and healing rituals were carried out at St. John's night (see Ariste 1969: 88).

24 Official names of the feast in Orthodox calendar are *Святые бесребреники Косма и Дамиан Асийские* 'Holy Silverless Cosmas and Damian the Assians'. In this way these saints, honoured for their skills to heal people without taking any payment, were distinguished from two other pairs of saints bearing the same name.

25 Votian vernacular term *jürtši* is derived from Old-Slavonic. The official title of the feast in Orthodox calendar is *Великомученик Георгий Победоносец* 'Great Martyr George the Victorious' commemorating the death of a 3rd century soldier of the Roman Empire, later Christian martyr.

26 This feast's day commemorates the Consecration of the Church of the Holy Grand Martyr George in Kiev (*Освящение церкви святого великомученика Георгия в Киеве*) by the Metropolitan Iliarion in the middle of the 11th century.

27 The feast titled *Перенесение мощей святителя и чудотворца Николая* 'Transportation of Relics of St. Nicholas the Wonderworker' marks the arrival of the remains of St. Nicholas to Bari in 1087 as a result of the activities of Italian merchants.

28 Official title of the commemoration day is *День святых апостолов Петра и Павла* 'The Day of Holy Apostles Peter and Paul'.

29 This feast is the most celebrated among the holy days dedicated to Archangel Michael in Eastern Orthodoxy, started in Laodicean Church in the 4th century. Official title of the feast in Orthodox calendar is *Собор Архистратига Михаила и прочих Небесных Сил бесплотных* 'Cathedral of Commander-in-Chief Michael and Other Incorporeal Heavenly Forces'.

30 Prophet Elijah was one of the prophets in Old Testament whose cult in Eastern Orthodoxy is connected with thunder and lightning bolts, assimilating thus in popular beliefs the traits of the earlier Slavic thunder god Perun (see *Илия Громовик* 'Elijah the Thunderer').

31 Church in Jõgõperä was built considerably late, in 1872–1874.

32 This feast is to commemorate early Christian martyrs Sts. Florus and Laurus who were venerated in Russian Orthodoxy as protectors of horses.

33 This tradition ceased to exist in 1938 when the local priest was repressed by the Soviet authorities. The chapel in Liivtšülä was destroyed during the Second World War in 1943; the chapel in Luutsa was moved from its original place in the 1950s and was used since then as a dwelling house (personal communication with Tatiana Efimova, 11.08.2006).

34 In brackets archive reference, village, name of the informant and folklore collector, year as well as reference to the published material is given if this data is available.

35 On the question of *братчина* (*складчина*) in Russian (East-Slavic) folk tradition see, for example, Zelenin 1991: 382–385; 1994: 107–110, 121; Lavrov 2000: 133–148, the latter providing a good historiographic survey on the topic. Izhorian *vakkove* (< *vakka* 'bushel'; Nirvi 1971: 633), documented extensively by Finnish folklorists in neighbouring coastal areas in the first half of the 20th century (see Haavio 1963: 68–74, 84–95), is apparently a Baltic-Finnic analogue of above-

mentioned Slavic festivity, sharing at the same time common traits with Estonian *vaku(se)pidu*-tradition fixed in the 16th century documents (cf. Ligi 1968: 48–50, 79–80).

36 Cf. for example, texts that describe celebration of *brattšinaD* on May 5th or on some other day in spring agreed by the community (Ariste 1969: 71, 106). Majority of the Votian texts, however, concern celebration of *brattšinaD* on the day of Prophet Elijah (*iliä*; 20.07/2.08), as this was the case with Russian *братчина* and Izhorian *vakkove* traditions (the latter was partly celebrated on the day of Sts. Peter and Paul, *pedro*, 29.06/12.07).

37 Detailed descriptions of the site see Alava 1901: 81–82; Lukkarinen 1912: 47–50; Paulaharju 1919: 100–101; Haavio 1963: 127–133. These Finnish researchers have found keen interest in the cultic practices carried out in Jarvigoistšülä on *iliä* and the complex has been widely interpreted as the remains of pagan sanctuary. On the other hand, the site and the practices contained evident Orthodox elements that can be interpreted in the context of popular Christianity (cf. Västrik 1998: 143–144; 2007: 175–177).

38 *Kul'a* (< *кyль*) – measure of grain (up to 150 kg).

39 According to the 18th century sources this kind of wooden crosses marked local sanctuaries in many Votian villages (cf. PSPR VII: 511–514; PSPR VIII: 137–139, 170–171; Trefurt 1783: 16–17). The 20th century folklore collections do not contain any references on this phenomenon.

40 See also drawing of the tree in Haavio 1963: 135.

41 In the agricultural working calendar this feast positioned into the period of slaughtering livestock for the winter season. According to some of the accounts people attending the celebration also brought along feet and heads of cows and pigs.

42 Somewhat surprisingly I did not find references to the activities on graveyards in connection with village feasts. This facet of the celebrations should be studied more thoroughly in future.

43 This practice was based on 18th century descriptions (see above) and was introduced by the hostess of the museum Tatiana Efimova.

44 Votians were not regarded as the representatives of autonomous ethnicity (nationality) in Soviet censuses since the 1930s. Up to recent times, and partly even at present, Votians were and are associated by the authorities with neighbouring Izhorians levelling thus linguistic differences and distinct ethnic origin.

NOTES FOR CONTRIBUTORS

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Kirchenblatt-Gimblett, Barbara 1989. Authorising Lives. – *Journal of Folklore Research*. Vol. 26, No. 2: 123–149.

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