

“RED GROWTH, YELLOW GROWTH, WHITE GROWTH...”: CHROMATIC BELIEFS IN UDMURT FOLK MEDICINE AND HEALING CHARMS

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Traditional culture is one of the key factors influencing our colour perception. The present article aims to analyse the colour concepts and symbolism of Udmurt folk medicine, in particular, healing rituals and charms. Consideration is given not only to the most widespread hues and their specific meanings within magic folk poetry, but also to the combination of colours, which fulfils an important role in emphasizing the efficacy of verbal means of magic. Additionally, the study demonstrates the folk classification of medical conditions based on colour characteristics. It is concluded that colour semantics entirely depends on the pragmatic objectives of healing rituals and charms.

Keywords: Udmurts, Udmurt folklore, folk medicine, healing rituals, verbal charms, colour symbolism

INTRODUCTION

The Udmurts are one of the Finno-Ugric peoples and live mostly in the rural areas of the Udmurt Republic, which is situated in the eastern part of the Eastern European Plain between the Kama and Vyatka rivers. Compact groups of Udmurts also inhabit the bordering regions, such as Tatarstan, Bashkortostan, Mari El, Perm Krai, and Kirov Oblast. The Udmurts have succeeded in preserving their language and original intangible culture. Verbal charms, which are an essential part of the Udmurt traditional culture, are of great significance for researchers as they contain traces of an archaic world view and represent ancient folk beliefs. Charms are still regarded as sacral texts by the Udmurts, and therefore they are mostly kept secret so they will not lose the magical power attributed to them.

A survey of recorded verbal charms demonstrates that the overwhelming majority are devoted to healing. In the Udmurt language they are known as *пелляськон* or *пелляськон кыл*, which literally mean ‘a word to blow (on a patient)’ as the process of charming diseases away suggests that healers blow

on their patients while whispering the magical texts. The healing charms are supposed to cure generally those medical conditions which are believed to be caused by demons of another world, evil sorcerers, or ordinary people who can either intentionally or unintentionally bring about ill health. Besides, Udmurt healing charms are also widely used to treat some medical problems attributed to non-supernatural causes, for example, warts, sties, abscesses, and bleeding. But there is one notable exception – in Udmurt folk medicine it is strictly forbidden to use charms for such infectious diseases as smallpox, measles, fever, and influenza, as verbal formulae in the mentioned cases are considered to be either powerless or even able to cause irreversible harm to patients.

Charming diseases away is still a living cultural phenomenon among the Udmurts. Up to the present day the practice has survived mostly among the rural population, but even some people living in cities do not neglect to seek charmers' help, especially when official medicine fails to cope with an illness. It is worth mentioning that, regrettably, thus far no collections of Udmurt charms have been compiled as a separate book. The sacral formulae are widely scattered in published and unpublished sources. Moreover, there is relatively scanty data available on this topic compared to other folklore texts. Thus, before starting the present research, I faced the challenge of collecting every piece of obtainable information about Udmurt healing rituals and charms. This paper is based on three different groups of sources. First, I have looked through manuscript collections stored at the folklore archives of the Udmurt Institute of History, Language and Literature (Izhevsk, the Udmurt Republic), the Udmurt State University (Izhevsk, the Udmurt Republic), and the Korolenko Glazov State Pedagogical Institute (Glazov, the Udmurt Republic). Second, charms for medical purposes and descriptions of healing rituals were collected from the published works by Udmurt, Russian, and foreign researchers of the late 19th century–the early 20th century (G. Y. Verešagin, P. M. Bogajevsky, I. Vasil'ev, B. Gavrilov, B. Munkácsi, Y. Wichmann, N. G. Pervuhin, I. S. Miheev, K. Gerd, etc.). Materials provided by contemporary scholars in their research on Udmurt folk medicine are also of great significance as they demonstrate the present-day tradition of charming (V. V. Napolskih, T. G. Minnijahmetova, E. N. Zaitseva, E. V. Chirkova). And finally, the paper is based on data I collected during my field work while interviewing the native speakers in different areas of the Udmurt Republic in the early 21st century.

THE CONCEPT OF COLOUR IN UDMURT FOLK MEDICINE AND HEALING CHARMS

The study of any cultural phenomena is inconceivable without analysis of its characteristics and attributes, for example, colour, which is not just a natural visual attribute, but rather a distinguishing feature which conveys specific meaning. In folk heritage it is supposed to be one of the most ancient symbols. Traditional culture is one the most important factors influencing our colour perception; therefore, research into chromatic folk beliefs has great significance for understanding the specifics of colour discernment. Moreover, colour concepts within folklore texts are thought to be some of the most valuable sources of information to investigate ethnic features of any indigenous society. Different folklore genres are known to retain unequal volume of cultural information, for example, more archaic texts, including verbal charms, have managed to preserve a number of basic mythic concepts. The study of chromatic beliefs in folk medicine and healing charms, in particular, reveals additional details in the traditional Udmurt world view and uncovers new semantic meanings provided by folklore texts.

In Udmurt ethnomedicine the concept of colour is principally developed in folk medical terminology: *чужектон* 'jaundice' is a substantive which originates from the verb *чужектыны* 'to become yellow', *кызымак* 'measles' comes from the Common Turkic stem **qurg*'- 'to become red' (Ahmet'janov 1988: 100). Furthermore, while characterizing illnesses and evil spirits, the adjective *сьод* 'black' is rather widely used in the Udmurt language, for instance, *сьод пери* 'a black demon' (Vasil'ev 1906: 187), *сьодкыль* 'plague' (literally: 'black disease'), and *сьодпotos* 'a black abscess' (Munkácsi 1887: 181).

The typical examples can be found in many other languages, for instance, the English word *jaundice* comes from the Old French *jaunice* 'yellowness', from *jaune* 'yellow', the Russian terms *желтуха* 'jaundice' and *краснуха* 'German measles' are derived from the adjectives *желтый* 'yellow' and *красный* 'red' respectively, and the Czech word *růže* 'erysipelas' originates from *růžový* 'pink' as the common symptom of the disease is a pink-coloured rash on the skin.

Moreover, in Udmurt folk medicine colour is the main criterion for classifying illnesses belonging to one group. According to one of our respondents, *сургубат* 'a swelling, growth, tumour' can be of different colours and twelve chromatic shades can be counted:

Горд сургубат, чуж сургубат, тоды сургубат, пурьсь сургубат, сьод сургубат, ну дас кык пöртэм со.

*Red growth, yellow growth, white growth, grey growth, black growth, well, it can be of twelve types.*¹

When asked to explain the difference between those types of growths, the interviewee could not provide more detailed information and said that this is what is popularly believed. The archive collections also mention such forms of jaundice as *сьод чужектон* ‘black jaundice’, *төдьы чужектон* ‘white jaundice’, and *чуж чужектон* ‘yellow jaundice’.²

The above-mentioned classification of illness is typical of not only the Udmurt tradition, but of many indigenous cultures as well. However, as opposed to the Udmurt material, the idea of illness as ‘a multicoloured being’ is mostly provided only in verbal charms which are supposed to be able to preserve intracultural information in maximally compressed form (Šindin 1993: 108). For instance, an English healing charm refers to barnguns of different colours:

There were three angels come from the west, to cure [---] of the barngun, white barngun, red barngun, black barngun [---]. (Davies 1996: 25)

Polish charms for medical purpose do not provide a description of the illness’s appearance, but some medical conditions are ascribed specific colours, for example, *macica* ‘abdominal pains’ can be yellow, red, green, and cornflower blue (Nebžegovskaja-Bartminskaja 2005: 313). The Komi-Zyryan healing charm, which circulates in mangled Russian language, is also worthy of mention:

Сиверный **чорнэй** [*hereinafter the words are highlighted in bold type by the author of quotation.* – Т. Р.] бык полденный **краснэй** бык утренный бык вечерный бык чорнэй грыжа краснэй грыжа жолтэй грыжа синей грыжа белэй грыжа сьякэй грыжа неси за синей горы, за окаян-море, за чорный лесы задолы и загреки (Uljašev 2011: 227).

The north black bull, noon red bull, morning bull, evening bull, black hernia, red hernia, yellow hernia, blue hernia, white hernia, any hernia, take [them] away to the other side of a blue mountain, to the other side of an ocean and sea, to the other side of the black forests, to the other side of the valleys, and to the other side of the rivers.

FORMULA OF ‘THREADING COLOURS’ IN UDMURT CHARMS

Researchers note that using colours to classify medical conditions is typical of all Slavic charms. The specialist in Serbian folk culture L. Radenkovič introduced the term ‘threading colours’ to describe the phenomenon of listing chromatic features of ailments in healing incantations (Radenkovič 1989: 123).

In contrast to Slavic charming tradition, where the formula of ‘threading colours’ is characteristic of many functional groups of charms, in Udmurt folk

medicine it is used only in charms for the evil eye and witchcraft and composes the key part of those verbal means of magic:

Сьӧд синмыныд, горд синмыныд, чӱж синмыныд, вож синмыныд кукке сьӧд мунчоез, огпол учкыса, тӧдбы ке карид, соку (нимзэ верано) син мед усӧз.

When you have a look at a black bath-house with your black eyes, red eyes, yellow eyes, and green eyes and make it white, only then you will be able to cast the evil eye on (the name of the patient). (Perevozčikova 1982 (1): 148–149)

Чӱж муртлэн, горд муртлэн, сьӧд муртлэн, тӧдбы муртлэн син усем талы. Кызбы нимыз? Кукке вумурт чиньыез чӱгыны шедьтӱзы, соку талы син мед усӧз. Тьфу, тьфу. Эмез-юмез та медло!

*A yellow person, a red person, a black person, and a white person have cast the evil eye on this human. What is his/her name? When they are able to chop a stone finger, only then they will be able to give the evil eye to this person. [Spitting twice]. May it be cure-remedy!*³

Кукке лыз, вож, сьӧд, курень сингӧсыз тодӱд; кукке сизбымдон сизбым нюлӧскись писпу йылӧз тодӱд; кукке возь вылысь сизбымдон сизбым турлы сяськаез тодӱд; кукке пӧсь корт, пӧсь из вылӧ сязлыны быгатӱд – соку син мед усӧз (нимзэ верано со муртлӧсь).

*When you know [all] blue, green, black, and brown eyes; when you know [all] treetops from seventy-seven forests; when you know seventy-seven different kinds of wildflowers; when you are able to spit on hot iron and a hot stone – only then you will be able to cast the evil eye on (the name of a sick person).*⁴

Moreover, the phenomenon of listing an evil person's eye colours was believed to have magic powers to cure the sick. For instance, a healing charm can only comprise the announcement of possible causes of a patient's illness:

Син усьыку, тазы верано шуыса кылӧме вань: «Лыз син усем, сьӧд син усем, вож син усем» шуыку, гурыме пыласькем вудӧ пазяно. Оззы куинь пол вераса пазыгоно.

*I have heard that when somebody receives the evil eye, one should say: 'A person with blue eyes has cast the evil eye [literally: blue eyes have fallen down [on the patient]–Т.Р.], a person with black eyes has cast the evil eye, and a person with green eyes has cast the evil eye' and dash the water that a sick person washed with into a stove. One should repeat the charm and dash the water three times.*⁵

Ъуж синь усем, вож синь усем, лыз синь усем, съод синь усем. Кӧче гынэ синь вань – ваньмызлэн синьмыз усем!

*A person with yellow eyes has given the evil eye, a person with green eyes has given the evil eye, a person with blue eyes has given the evil eye, and a person with black eyes has given the evil eye. People with whatever colour eyes have given the evil eye!*⁶

In some verbal charms this formula could appear only in the final part of the text and was aimed to increase the efficacy of the healing rite:

Кукe гур вылэ гон потйз, сокы мед син усёз та адыми вылэ но; кукe андан вылэ синзэс уськытозы, сокы мед синзэс уськытозы та адыми вылэ но; кукe пылез кырымтыр кырмын быгатод, сокы син мед усёз та адыми вылэ но. Ъуж син, вож син, тӧды син, съод син, горд син.

When fur grows on a stove, then may this person receive the evil eye; when they give the evil eye to steel, then may they give the evil eye to this person; when you are able to clutch a fistful of dust, then may this person receive the evil eye. Yellow eyes, green eyes, white eyes, black eyes, and red eyes. (Verešagin 1889: 38)

Ъуж син, вож син, чагыр син, лемлет син. Эмез-юмез та медло.

*Yellow eyes, green eyes, blue eyes, and pink eyes. May it be a cure-remedy.*⁷

In Udmurt healing rituals, threading evil eye colours through charms intends to identify every possible person who could consciously or unconsciously harm other people. It is regarded as a specific way of revealing who is to be blamed for problems with health. Establishing the cause of illnesses is supposed to be one of the most significant elements of folk healing rituals. The following verbal charm also pursues the aim to list all imaginable people and beings who can cast the evil eye:

Пиёсмурт урод синмын учкем, кышномурт урод синмын учкем; Ъуч урод синмын учкем, Ъуч кышно урод синмын учкем; пор урод синмын учкем; тушмон урод синмын учкем.

A man possessing the evil eye glared [at the patient], a woman possessing the evil eye glared [at the patient]; a Russian man possessing the evil eye glared [at the patient]; a Russian woman possessing the evil eye glared [at the patient]; a Mari person possessing the evil eye glared [at the patient]; an enemy [demon] possessing the evil eye glared [at the patient]. (Munkácsi 1887: 182–183)

It is noteworthy that the formula first mentions people of the local environment, second, representatives of other cultures perceived as hostile population, and finally, beings of the alien environment, including supernatural ones.

Unambiguously, colour in magic folk poetry is not just a neutral colour characteristic which lacks symbolic meaning. Adjectives describing eye colours in charms are discerned as neutral only when they are used separately. But if they are brought together in one sentence or text, the combination of colours emphasises their negative connotations as, for example, in the traditional formula *сьöd син усем, горд син усем, вож син усем, ёуж син усем*, which states literally: 'black eyes have fallen down [= harmed the patient], red eyes have fallen down, green eyes have fallen down, and yellow eyes have fallen down'. Listed in one sentence, colours become synonymous with each other and compose one semantic sequence, that is 'black = bloodshot = bilious' (Vladykina 2008: 84). Additionally, the Udmurt healing charms allude to such atypical and unnatural eyes as *лемлет син* 'pink eyes', *ёуж син* 'yellow eyes', and *тöдыи син* 'white eyes', which reflect not actual eye colours but rather their symbolic implication. Added to the discussed colour chain, they continue the above-mentioned semantic sequence (blue/cold/dead = pink/unnatural/alien = white/blank/lifeless), dramatizing the situation and emphasizing the sacrality of the charm.

Colours brought together create a variegated picture, but multicolouredness is considered as a negative attribute in many indigenous cultures (Sagalaev 1990; Nevskaja 1993; Uljašev 2011), including the Udmurt tradition. Brindled animals are believed to be representatives of another world, which is why it was prohibited to sacrifice them to the gods inhabiting the skies, whereas it was perfectly acceptable to offer up pied geese and ducks to *Lud*, the god of wildlife (Šutova 2001: 81). In Udmurt historical legends it was a piebald horse that was responsible for the death of a hero, defender of the Udmurts from their enemies (Vladykina 1998: 184–185). According to folk beliefs, a cuckoo flying towards a farmstead bodes ill (Vladykina 2009 (2): 278). Researchers conclude that multicolouredness is attributed negative interpretation due to the stereotype of mythological perception of colours. The other, invisible, world was associated with the unknown and with wildlife, which is visually recognized as a polychromatic picture.

The analysed characteristic is a permanent attribute of illness spirits as well. The Khanty, for example, believed that the smallpox demon *Ves Yung* looked like an ugly person wearing horrible parti-coloured clothes. In order to propitiate it, the Khanty hung a colourful piece of clothing on a bird cherry tree (Kulemzin 2000: 118). The Bashkir imagined that illnesses resembled magpies and fever wore a hat made of lynx fur (Nikonova 2000: 20). The Balto-

Slavic languages also provide evidence that illnesses were parti-coloured beings (Nevskaja 1993: 176–177).

COLOUR SEMANTICS IN UDMURT HEALING CHARMS

In folk beliefs colour is considered to be a characteristic which is attributed specific symbolic meaning. This part of the paper aims to analyse colours mentioned in Udmurt healing charms and their implications. A quantitative analysis of the magical texts reveals that the most commonly used colour in Udmurt incantations is black. This achromatic characteristic is rather typical of Udmurt folklore. However, unlike other folklore genres, in healing incantations, black expresses a relatively unambiguous and monosemantic meaning. In the vast majority of charms, black is the major characteristic of the underworld which is believed to exist simultaneously with our world and to resemble its physical environment, but is black in hue:

Шунды съёры куштэм аздагиез, дас кык дьыро аздагиез кукке вал карыса, дас кык дьыраз сермет поныса, вылаз пуксьыса, съод Камез котыртыны быгатйд, сокы сиед тон мынэсьтым сюлэмме.

When you are able to turn a twelve-headed serpent thrown far behind the sun into a horse, to put a bindle on its twelve heads, to mount it, and to ride it around the Black Kama River, then you will eat my heart.
(Munkácsi 1952: 160–161)

In the Udmurt culture the Kama River is only known as *Төдъы Кам* ‘The White Kama’ and associated with a great/sacral river. A dichotomous contrast between *Сьод Кам* ‘The Black Kama’ and *Төдъы Кам* ‘The White Kama’ correlates with the concept of death- and life-giving water (Vladykin 1997: 198) and may be considered as evidence of the idea that originally the world was believed to be divided not into three parts (upper, middle, and lower), but rather into two structures (the human world and the other world) (Vladykina 2009 (1): 102). Moreover, black is the main attribute of creatures inhabiting the underworld/underwater world:

Мора шорын съод ош сылэ, солэн сюр вылаз свеча жуа. Кукке солэн сюр йылаз тылъяра луиз ке, соку тылъяра мед луоз.

*There is a black bull in the middle of a sea, and a candle burns on its horns. When its horns burn, then may the patient suffer burns.*⁸

Съод ты пушкын съод чорыг. Съод чорыглы кукке син усёз, соку син мед усёз.

There is a black fish in a black lake. When the black fish receives the evil eye, then may the patient receive the evil eye. (Perevozčikova 1982 (2): 95)

Folk beliefs about illnesses and evil spirits as black beings influenced the choice of sacrifice which was offered to the demons of the underworld. In the case of illnesses, especially outbreaks of diseases, the Udmurts used to immolate black domestic animals (bulls, sheep) or birds (chickens) to propitiate spirits and gods responsible for poor health.

The majority of creatures mentioned in Udmurt healing charms—insects, birds, and animals—are of the darkest colour: the black butterfly, black raven/crow, black starling, black cockerel, black hen, black gull, black heron, black goose, black hedgehog, black frog/toad, black snake, black horse, black stallion, black cat, black goat, and black bear. Black is a unifying core which provides one semantic meaning to all of these beings.

It should be noted that the symbolism of the colour black is developed differently in Udmurt folklore genres. In recruit tunes, for instance, a black raven is a transcendental sign of approaching death, trouble, and grief, highlighting the tragedy of the situation when a conscripted soldier leaves his home and village (Arzamazov 2010: 52–53). But in the healing charms black is a marker of the underworld, emphasizing the status of the zoomorphic personages. Dependence of colour connotations on folklore genres was also studied by researchers of Russian traditional culture. Such symbolic meanings of black as death, grief, misfortune, and sorrow are typical of Russian folklore, but not of Russian verbal charms. In the magical texts black implies danger, remoteness, and the other world. Additionally, it composes part of the phrase ‘a black liver’ which is specific only to Russian charms for medical purposes, and while describing the human body it symbolizes the locus of the disease (Gul'tjaeva 2000: 11).

In the Udmurt charming tradition black hardly ever expresses its literal or primary meaning and denotes actual properties of the described objects. Moreover, it is rarely used within common folklore expressions in verbal charms. The main function of the colour black is related to the pragmatic objectives of the charm, that is, to defeat the illness spirit by demonstrating its weakness to fulfil conditions laid down by the charmer. As a rule, these conditions express impossibility to change the established world order, including the existing colour properties of objects:

Сьöd синмыныд, горд синмыныд, чуж синмыныд, вож синмыныд куке
сьöd мунчоез, огпол учкыса, тöдбы ке карид, соку (нимзэ верано) син
мед усёз;

Съöd синмыныд, горд синмыныд, чуж синмыныд, вож синмыныд
куке съöd гондырез, огпол учкыса, тöды ке карид, соку (нимзэ верано)
син мед усёз;

Съöd синмыныд, горд синмыныд, чуж синмыныд, вож синмыныд
куке вылын ветлйсь съöd зазегез, огпол учкыса, тöды ке карид, соку
(нимзэ верано) син мед усёз;

Съöd синмыныд, горд синмыныд, чуж синмыныд, вож синмыныд та
дунне вылын кудмында съöd вань, сое огпол учкыса, тöды ке карид,
соку (нимзэ верано) син мед усёз.

*When you turn a black bathhouse into a white one, glancing at it with
your black eyes, with your red eyes, with your yellow eyes, and with your
green eyes, then may (the name of the patient) receive the evil eye;*

*When you turn a black bear into a white one, glancing at it with your
black eyes, with your red eyes, with your yellow eyes, and with your green
eyes, then may (the name of the patient) receive the evil eye;*

*When you turn a black celestial goose into a white one, glancing at it
with your black eyes, with your red eyes, with your yellow eyes, and with
your green eyes, then may (the name of the patient) receive the evil eye;*

*When you turn everything that is black in the world into white, glancing
at them with your black eyes, with your red eyes, with your yellow eyes,
and with your green eyes, then may (the name of the patient) receive the
evil eye. (Perevozčikova 1982 (1): 148–149)*

The second most common colour in the Udmurt healing charms is white, which originally symbolized cleanliness and whiteness. In spells for skin diseases such as *кормос* ‘scabies, an itch’, *тэйсе / тэльсе* ‘cancer, a malignant tumour; a boil/abscess’, *номос* ‘an abscess, furuncle; a malignant tumour’ the term *тöды* ‘white’ correlates with the word *югыт* ‘white/light/bright’ and receives additional semantic meaning, namely ‘clean/healthy’:

Тоуэзь люгыт, кизили люгыт: тауэн чыртйез но люгыт!
The moon is bright, stars are light: this person’s neck is also bright / clean!
(Wichmann 1893: 179)

Шунды люгыт, тоуэзь люгыт, кизили люгыт: та муртлэн потосэз эбöу
ни!
*The sun is bright, the moon is bright, stars are bright: this person has no
abscess anymore!* (Wichmann 1893: 177)

Ошмес люгыт, тоуэзь люгыт: со люгыт та муртлэн чыртйяз мед люгдоз!
Тэйсеэз эбöу ни!

The spring is bright / clean, the moon is bright: may their brightness light this person's neck! He / she has no abscess anymore! (Wichmann 1893: 180)

In Udmurt folklore texts white implies irreality and sacrality. In contrast to black, which is the major colour characteristic of the underworld, white is the main characteristic of the upper, celestial world:

Волгалэн-моралэн вожаз вож кыз вань. Со кызлэн выжыяз тӧдды ошмес вань. Куке со тӧдды ошмесэз быдтӧйд, сокы та адямиез ведна!
There is a green spruce at the mouth of the Volga River-sea. There is a white spring under the spruce. When you destroy the spring, then you will be able to bewitch this person! (Munkácsi 1887: 177–178)

Тӧдды Камез вамэн жуаса потэмед ке луиз, сокы мед жуалоз (висись муртлэсь нимзэ верано).

When you are able to turn to fire and walk through The White/Sacral Kama, then may (the name of the patient) suffer burns.⁹

Requirements which the illness has to satisfy clearly evidence that it is powerless and helpless to damage any object of the upper world, as they are considered sacred:

Куке шаплы шурлэн уллапал пунгаз вуид ке, отӧсь тӧдды гӧгӧр-синьлэсь йӧлзэ ке вайид, качиез мон сыйин пунгит ке ньылӧйд: соку си-ю та адямиез!

When you reach the mouth of a fast river, bring some milk of a white dove therefrom, and swallow scissors point-first like I do"; then eat and drink this person! (Munkácsi 1952: 152–153)

The illness demon is ordered to find a white dove in the lower part of the river, i.e. the underworld, which is beyond the bounds of possibility as it does not inhabit that place.

The symbolic meaning of the colour white is also developed in attributes of healing rituals, but its semantics directly depends on the type of the conducted rite. An infant who had poor health, often felt unwell, and constantly cried was supposed to have been substituted by a fiend. The healing rite was aimed at returning the replaced healthy baby to its family:

Уйшор уйин пиналэз кӱто, дӑсяло-кӱтчало но нуса кошко парсь кыллем интӧе. Со пиналлэн мумиз, собере пелляськись кышно луэ на. Парсь кар дӑне вуса, отысь парсьӧсты улляло. Со парсь бервылэ пиналэз выдтыло куинь пол. Отын пелляса-мараса, пиналзэс бинялто миськем тӧдды дӑсен. Озыы вырса, кошко гуртазы, гуртэ ик вуытчозязы, нокин шоры но уг куарето.

*At midnight a sick baby is clothed and taken to the place where pigs are kept. The mother of the infant and a female charmer [participate in the ritual]. They reach the pigs and drive them away. They put the sick baby in the pigs' place three times. At the end of the rite, they wrap the infant in clean white clothes. Then they go home and on their way they utter no sound.*¹⁰

This example emphasizes the possible ways of treating substituted children: symbolical/ritual defilement of the baby implied that *шайтан* 'the fiend' would not tolerate such cruel treatment of his child and would take him/her back, returning a healthy human one; ritually wrapping the infant in clean white clothes highlights the idea of his/her rebirth and transition from the state of being sick to a good physical and mental condition.

In Udmurt folk medicine white is generally used in one functional group of magical texts: verbal charms for bleeding. The most common objects of this colour are a white stone, a white linden stick, a white chimney, and white wood:

Куке тӧдды пупшылэн вируыз потӱз, соку мед потоз. Куке тӧдды мурӕлэн вируыз потӱз, соку мед потоз.

*When a white linden stick starts to bleed, then may [a patient / cut / wound] bleed. When a white chimney starts to bleed, then may [a patient / cut / wound] bleed.*¹¹

Куке тӧдды пышылэн вirez потӱз, соку вир мед потоз. Куке тӧдды жӧккышетлэн вirez потӱз, соку вир мед потоз. Куке тӧдды зарезь шукылэн вirez потӱз, соку вirez мед потоз.

*When a white linden stick starts to bleed, then may [a patient / cut / wound] bleed. When a white tablecloth starts to bleed, then may [a patient / cut / wound] bleed. When white sea foam starts to bleed, then may [a patient / cut / wound] bleed.*¹²

Healing charms for bleeding implicitly demonstrate opposition between two hues—white and red. In indigenous cultures they compose an antonymous pair: white generally stands for such characteristics as clean/bright/celestial/sacral and red commonly implies coloured/unclean/dirty/otherworldly concepts (Belova 1999: 647). However, in the above-given formulas the analysed colours are attributed ambivalent meanings: red symbolizes life/full-bloodedness and white implies lifelessness/deadness/dryness.

A further analysis of the colour concept *зорд* 'red' reveals that it is very scantily present in Udmurt healing charms. The situation was noted to be typical of most Udmurt folklore genres: in contrast to other hues, red is quantitatively less representative and is predominantly spread in minor folklore genres (Ar-

zamazov 2010: 59). Disregarding incantations where colours are combined to create polychromatic images, red is used only in two cases. First, red has no symbolic meaning and stands for a real visual characteristic:

Тодды пуппылэн кукке вируыз потйз, тодды излэн кукке вируыз потйз,
горд кузьбылилэн кукке вируыз потйз, соку тынад вируыз мед потоз.

*When a white linden stick bleeds, a white stone bleeds, and a red ant bleeds, then may you bleed.*¹³

Second, red is used to describe not a real animal, but rather a mythological image of a bull, which was originally associated with the underworld and personifies water (Vladykin 1994: 77–80):

Шунды жужанын горд ош сълэ, со ошлэн кукке сюр йылаз тэльсе потйз,
соку тыныд тэльсе потоз.

There is a red bull in the east. When an abscess appears on its horns, then may you have an abscess. (Zaitseva 2004: 192)

The bull's red colour in the verbal charm can be regarded as a distinguishing characteristic of a chthonian belief creature that is associated simultaneously with the productive power of the earth or water and the destructive potency of the netherworld. It is noteworthy that the red bull inhabits the east, which according to traditional world view corresponds to the concept of the starting point, origin, birth, and resurrection. In the Turkic cultures, for instance, red corresponds with new-born babies and dead ancestors, and with birth and death (Gabyševa 2009: 57).

Correlation between the red bull and the earth is also observed in an Udmurt custom to sacrifice a red animal to the god of the earth known as *Мукълчин / Мукълдысин / Мукълчин Инмар* (Munkácsi 1952: 123). The red chromatic code is not just a visual index – its semantics is determined by Udmurt mythological beliefs. In Udmurt folklore texts an image of the red bull is attributed additional symbolic meaning. For example, in folk riddles and idioms the metaphorical expression *горд ош* 'a red bull' symbolizes fire, blaze and flames (Arzamazov 2010: 59). For comparison, in Slavic verbal charms red stands for, first, the attribute of mythological personages, some animals, and illnesses; second, some objects belonging to the above-mentioned beings; and, third, some parts of the space where evil spirits are expelled (Radenkovič 1989: 136).

In Udmurt healing rituals red exhibits one of the distinguishing characteristics of applied objects. For measles, for example, a red piece of cloth had to be wrapped around a child's wrist (Zaiceva 2004: 148). The custom can be interpreted in different ways. On the one hand, according to the principle of curing like with like, the Udmurts might have believed that the red patch

could ‘take away’ the redness of a baby’s skin. On the other hand, in compliance with Udmurt folk beliefs, red is attributed apotropaic properties and is perceived as an effective cure for illnesses and the evil eye. In order to protect a new-born baby from the evil eye, for instance, a red thread or yarn was tied around the infant’s right wrist (Gerd 1993: 55), or a red bead sewn on the baby’s clothes was believed to protect them from rubella (Minnijahmetova 2003: 50). To charm sties away, a patient or charmer touches an infected place with their ring finger and says:

Толэзь бертэм, шунды бертэм, кытысь ке лыктэм, отчы мед бертоз,
мед кошкоз.

*The moon has returned, the sun has returned. May the sty go back to the place where it came from.*¹⁴

At the final part of the ritual the ring finger on the left hand is tied with a red thread or yarn if the right eye is inflamed, or the ring finger on the right hand if the sty is on the left eye. The first part of the ritual aims at making the swelling go back to its ‘home’, the place where it came from. It is done with the help of the ring finger, which is attributed a specific function and ability to establish communication between the human and the other worlds in folk culture (Levkievskaja 2004: 616). Tying a thread around the finger is intended to protect a patient from potential illness in the immediate future as the taken action symbolizes the creation of impenetrable barriers which can prevent the disease from recurring. If a wrist hurt and ached, a bracelet made of red woollen rings should be worn (Verešagin 2000: 27). The colour red amplifies the thread’s apotropaic function. The high semiotic status of the colour red in folk medicine is explained by beliefs according to which red as the colour of blood is associated with life. In traditional cultures interpretations of chromatic characteristics are based on, first, the correspondence between colours and the oppositions goodness – evil and life–death, and, secondly, on objects’ connotations and assessment (Tolstaja 2002: 16).

In Udmurt charming tradition the red colour is opposed to black by analogy with the opposition weak/powerless and strong/powerful. The best charmers are believed to be people who have black hair, while red-haired people are prohibited from using spells because they are considered to be powerless to charm diseases away and charming practice even can harm them.¹⁵

In Udmurt incantations for medical purposes the traditional colour epithet *йүж* ‘yellow’ is the third most common hue after black and white. But it should be mentioned that this colour characteristic has gained widespread use due to healing charms for jaundice. The situation is generated by the principles of imitative magic. For example, patients suffering from jaundice were supposed

to eat a yellow butterfly (Miheev 1926: 47) or a yellow flower, or to drink an infusion made with yellow camomile,¹⁶ believing that the yellow colour of the objects could take the disease away.¹⁷ Typical examples of treating jaundice can be found in many indigenous cultures. The Slavic peoples, for instance, suggested that not only yellow butterflies and plants with yellow flowers, roots, and juice had curing properties, but also yellow objects and chickens with yellow legs (Usačeva 1999: 202). The same beliefs underlie the Udmurt apotropaic magic: an amber bead was sewn on a new-born baby's clothes as an amulet against jaundice (Minnijahmetova 2003: 50).

Currently all Udmurt verbal charms for jaundice retain the concept 'yellow'. In the majority of cases it emphasizes the impossibility to satisfy imposed conditions. In some magical texts it is achieved due to mentioning non-existing realia:

Сари гондырлэн вылаз кукке пукыса, кукке ворттылїд, кукке шедьтїд, соку пыр. Їуж чечеглэсь кукке йӧлзэ кыскыса поттїд, кукке сектаны шедьтїд ке, соку пыр. Їуж пужымлэн килез кызы ке тӧласа кошке, озыы ик мед кошкӧз.

*When you are able to mount a yellow bear and ride it, then may the person develop jaundice [literally: then enter the person]. When you are able to milk a yellow wagtail and give it to drink [to the patient], then may the person develop jaundice. May jaundice leave the patient like tiny particles of yellow pine bark flying away with the wind.*¹⁸

Other healing charms present the evidence that illness is not able to change the existing world order:

Сизьымдон но сизьым сьӧд валлэсь быжзэ, ѳужектон причча басьтыса, чисто ѳуж кариз ке, соку сое мед ѳужектон басьтоз. Сизьымдон сизьым сьӧд кырныжез ѳужектон причча чисто ѳуж кариз ке, соку сое мед быгатоз ѳужектыны.

*If jaundice turns seventy-seven black horses' tails yellow, then may the patient suffer from jaundice. If jaundice turns seventy-seven black ravens yellow, then may the patient suffer from jaundice.*¹⁹

In Udmurt incantations yellow is also presented as the colour of the upper/heavenly world:

Ин пилем вылын пар ѳуж уж вань. Со ужез кукке веднаны шедьтїд, сокы та адямиез ведна!

There is a pair of yellow stallions above the clouds. When you are able to bewitch those stallions, then bewitch this person! (Munkácsi 1887: 177–178)

The colour epithet *йуж* 'yellow' correlates with other attributes which are widespread in healing magical texts, such as iron, copper, brass, silver, and golden. They are all ascribed similar semantic meaning that is inaccessible, unapproachable, and safeguarding (Vladykina 1998: 82):

Инмарен но пилемен вискын зарни бурдо душес улэ. Кукке та зарни бурдо душесэз веднад ке, сокы та адямиез ведна!
There is a hawk/kite with golden wings between the God and clouds. When you bewitch this golden-winged hawk/kite, then bewitch this person!
(Munkácsi 1887: 177–178)

Чиньыись азвесь зундэслы кукке синь усёз, сокы синь мед усёз тауы!
When a silver ring worn on a finger receives the evil eye, then may this person receive the evil eye! (Wichmann 1893: 173)

Туй кульчо пыртй кукке потыны шедьгйд, соку сётйсько.
*When you are able to get through a brass ring, then I will give [the patient to you].*²⁰

However, in other Udmurt folklore genres, for example, folksongs, the colour yellow is deployed to express psychoemotional conditions (solitude, loneliness, melancholy), and to demonstrate beauty, wealth, and riches (Arzamazov 2008).

CONCLUSIONS

Thus, colour symbolism entirely depends on pragmatic objectives of healing rituals and charms. In the majority of cases colour epithets are attributed a symbolic meaning and provide specific semantic information, which helps to emphasize the given idea and to vividly express thoughts. The study demonstrates that Udmurt verbal charms provide additional symbolic interpretations which may differ from widespread folklore semantic connotations. The most common colour epithets used in Udmurt healing charms appear to be achromatic hues of the luminous spectrum such as black and white. The conclusion does not seem surprising, considering the fact that in traditional culture those two colours equally correlate with the invisibility of the other – inhuman – world. Red and yellow are used rather sporadically. The other colour concepts (blue, light blue, brown, green, grey, and pink) are mostly deployed in the formulae of 'threading colours' which emphasize not a separate colour, but rather their combinations, contributing, thus, to the creation of multi-coloured pictures. And only in exceptional cases colour as an object's natural visual characteristic is used in a denotational sense, developing no additional meanings. However, even in those cases colour fulfils a valuable function, that is, to adopt and develop

an idea that as evil spirits are powerless to change the colour of real objects, they are unable to threaten the existing world stability.

NOTES

- ¹ Mrs. Romanova K., aged 80, the village of Sep, Igra Region, Udmurtia, 2007.
- ² Folklore and Dialectological Archives of Udmurt State University. A copybook by Eshmakova N. V. pp. 9–10. The village of Uzei-Tuklya, Uva Region, Udmurtia. 2003–2004.
- ³ Folklore Archives of Udmurt State University. Copybook 7. pp. 33–34. The village of Starye Yuberi, Mozhga Region, Udmurtia. 1975.
- ⁴ Folklore Archives of the Udmurt Institute of History, Language and Literature. File 1381. Sheet 2.
- ⁵ Folklore and Dialectological Archives of Udmurt State University. A copybook by Romanova E. N. pp. 15–16. The village of Vishur, Mozhga Region, Udmurtia. 1997–1998.
- ⁶ Folklore Archives of the Udmurt Institute of History, Language and Literature. File 727. Copybook 2. Sheet 4.
- ⁷ Folklore Archives of Udmurt State University. Copybook 1. p. 38. The village of Yugdon, Selta Region, Udmurtia. 1980.
- ⁸ Folklore and Dialectological Archives of Udmurt State University. A copybook by Shklyayeva E. A. p. 4. The village of Kabachigurt, Igra Region, Udmurtia. 2003–2004.
- ⁹ Folklore Archives of the Udmurt Institute of History, Language and Literature. File 519. Sheet 170.
- ¹⁰ Folklore Archives of the Udmurt Institute of History, Language and Literature. File 519. Sheet 288.
- ¹¹ Folklore Archives of Udmurt State University. Copybook 3. Sheet 3. The village of Loloshur-Vozhi, Grakhovo Region, Udmurtia. 2003.
- ¹² Folklore Archives of the Udmurt Institute of History, Language and Literature. File 1381. Sheet 2.
- ¹³ Folklore Archives of the Udmurt Institute of History, Language and Literature. File 1381. Sheet 2.
- ¹⁴ Folklore Archives of the Udmurt Institute of History, Language and Literature. File 519. Sheet 170.
- ¹⁵ Mrs. Korepanova G., aged 76, the village of Sep, Igra Region, Udmurtia, 2007.
- ¹⁶ Mrs. Korepanova G., aged 76, the village of Sep, Igra Region, Udmurtia, 2007.
- ¹⁷ Mrs. Ivanova Z., aged 86, the village of Puzhmez, Kez Region, Udmurtia, 2004.

- ¹⁸ Folklore and Dialectological Archives of Udmurt State University. A copybook by Eshmakova N. V. pp. 4–5. The village of Uzei-Tuklya, Uva Region, Udmurtia. 2003–2004.
- ¹⁹ Folklore and Dialectological Archives of Udmurt State University. A copybook by Shklyayeva E. A. p. 10. The village of Kabachigurt, Igra Region, Udmurtia. 2003–2004.
- ²⁰ Folklore Archives of Udmurt State University. Copybook 15. pp. 30–31. The village of Bolshaya Kibya, Mozhga Region, Udmurtia. 1977.

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ISNFR Committee on Charms, Charmers and
Charming

Incantatio

An International Journal on
Charms, Charmers and Charming

Issue 5

Editor: Mare Kõiva

Tartu 2017

General Editor: Mare Kõiva
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Supported by and affiliated to the Centre of Excellence in Estonian Studies (CEES, European Regional Development Fund) and is related to research projects IRG 22-5 (Estonian Research Council) and EKKM14-344 (Estonian Ministry of Education and Research).



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ISSN 2228-1355

<http://www.folklore.ee/incantatio>

<https://dx.doi.org/10.7592/Incantatio>

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