

2. THE KAZAN TATARS

Incantations

Çetin 2007, 5²⁰⁴

May this year's harvest
be fortunate and blessed!
May life be without want!
May livestock, wealth increase,
may the foals run,
may our crop be plentiful,
may it be complete like an egg!
May our faces and hearts
be white as eggs!

Yus. 356/1²⁰⁵

Earth, earth!
Give me my strength!
To my six horses
give their life force!²⁰⁶

Yus. 356/2²⁰⁷

Give me five wagonfuls of rye!
Give me the strength of a young foal!

²⁰⁴ A prayer recited during an egg sacrifice offered to the earth's spirit.

²⁰⁵ A prayer said to the earth after the harvest.

²⁰⁶ In the Tatar original, the word *köç* 'strength' appears in the second line, and here the word *kuät*, which also means 'strength', but more in the sense of 'ability, life force, energy, performance, vitality'.

²⁰⁷ A prayer said to the earth after the harvest.

Yus. 356/3

Earth's mother, earth's father!²⁰⁸
Give me
thy own strength!

Kat. 9/1²⁰⁹

Strong hernia,
hard hernia!
Begone!
If thou goest not
I'll do for thee!

Kat. 9/2²¹⁰

In the name of the merciful God!
I ask thee,
round snake,
brass snake
begone!
If thou goest not,
my head will give one to thy head!

Kat. 10-11²¹¹

Go to the nine roads,
sunken into the ground!
Let the wind take thee!
Go whence thou came!
Begone in a month,
Begone in a day!

²⁰⁸ In the Tatar text, there are *džir änkäse* and *džir ätkäse*. Although *änkä* means 'female' (TRS 730) and *ätkä* 'male' (TRS 730, 733), in the translation I followed 'mother' and 'father', common in the Russian literature.

²⁰⁹ Incantation against hernia (*büser*).

²¹⁰ Incantation against a headache caused by the snake king's spirit.

²¹¹ Incantation against a swelling in the armpit.

Kat. 11/1

Let the bunion disappear!
Let the brass sink into the ground!
Let the scabies rash harden!

Kat. 11/2²¹²

I'll mount my chestnut horse,
and trot away on it.
I'll make it flap its wings
and stamp its hooves.
Begone, cursed one!
Begone, miserable!
I invoke the Almighty God against thee!

Kat. 11/3²¹³

Frog, frog!
Wet frog!
Strong frog!
Begone!
If thou goest not,
I shall destroy thee!
In the name of God!

Kat. 11/4²¹⁴

Frog!
Disappears from the head,
and the iron from the stone!
Let it freeze to the ice with its back!
Let it stick to the sand with its chest!

²¹² Incantation against puerperal fever.

²¹³ Incantation against mumps, neuralgia and diphtheria. All three diseases were thought to be caused by the frog prince's spirit.

²¹⁴ Incantation against mumps, neuralgia and diphtheria. These were thought to be caused by the frog prince's spirit. They put salt in a spoon and dripped honey on it while incanting.

Begone in a month,
begone in a day!

Kat. 11/5²¹⁵

The frog disappears from the head,
and the iron from the stone.
May the ice grab its nose
and the sand grab its back!
May it leave its place carelessly,
not noticing the winter!

Kat. 12/1²¹⁶

I shroud thee in smoke!
Black eye,
sheep's eye,
grey eye,
evil eye!
Return thither
whence thou came!

Kat. 12/2²¹⁷

Seventy black youths!
Let your evil eye
not be cast upon this person,
but upon the worn-out shoes!
Let this person be healed!
Let the evil eye return to
whence it came!

²¹⁵ Incantation against mumps, neuralgia and diphtheria. All three diseases were thought to be caused by the Frog Prince's spirit. They smeared butter on the affected body part while incanting three times.

²¹⁶ Incantation said when removing the effects of being harmed. They burnt acorns picked from the northern side of an oak tree and smoked the patient with its smoke while incanting nine times.

²¹⁷ Incantation against the evil eye.

Kat. 12/3²¹⁸

Under the dapple white horse
stands a golden table.
On this table
there is food and honey.
Thou art called thither.
Go thither,
Thou hast no business here!

Kat. 12/4²¹⁹

I use the tool given by God.
There stands a golden oven,
in the oven, a golden frying pan,
in the frying pan, a golden apple.
Whoever brings hither that apple
with a golden handle and a golden fork,
may the asthma sicken that person,
not this person here!

Kobl. 458²²⁰

We offer it to God,
may the sacrifice be fulfilled!

Kobl. 463²²¹

Whence thou came,
thither go!
Give it to thy master!

²¹⁸ Incantation against syphilis, incanted upon eleven different medicinal plants before giving them to the patient.

²¹⁹ Incantation against asthma, which they cured by putting salt in a cup, pouring water over it and incanting upon it.

²²⁰ Short prayer recited when killing the sacrificial animal offered to a *kiremet* by Christian Tatars. Although the sacrifice is offered to the *kiremet*, God is invoked in the prayer and called *Allah*. I cite a similar record under Sofi. 684.

²²¹ In the case of diseases involving blisters, which were thought to originate from the spirit of water, they wrapped some porridge in a rag, put it in the water and said the above incantation.

Kobl. 464²²²

Water's father,
water's mother!
Catch me not,
touch me not,
put not thy harm and trouble
onto me!

Mukh. 187/1²²³

Earth's father,
earth's mother!
If thou holdest me,
let me go!
I give thee soup-water,²²⁴
give me lightness!

Mukh. 187/2

The Moon returns,
the Sun returns.
Earth's master – red beard,
water's master – onion beard,
sky's master – sloe beard.²²⁵

²²² Incantation against diseases caused by water.

²²³ Incantation to cure a bellyache caused by the earth's master. The sick person would drive a nail into the ground and pour warm water over it through his shirt collar while reciting the above incantation. The text was recorded by Mukhamedova from Mishar Tatars in Kulatkin. A similar ritual was recorded among the Bashkirs. The incantation recited there is interpreted by Khisamitdinova as one against the *zäxmät*, but in fact, the Bashkirs also used it in the case of diseases caused by the earth.

²²⁴ In the Tatar original, the words used are *aš-su*. The primary meaning of *aš* is soup – although in compounds, it can mean food in general; *su* means 'water'; therefore, a possible translation could be "I give you food and water".

²²⁵ In incantations of this type, in the three nominal sentences of parallel structures, the use of the attributes of the word 'beard' (red, onion, sloe) is not based on the meaning of the words but on their phonetic makeup "replying" to the first part of the structure. In Tatar, the three invoked masters – earth, water and

The Moon returns,
the Sun returns.
Whence thou came, go thither!
I have come to ask with my bread and salt.
Provide help!
May its remains and captivity be here!²²⁶

Nas. 267-268²²⁷

1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9
Let it return from nine,
go to dust, into the earth!
1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7
Let it return from seven,
go to the wind, into the storm!
1, 2, 3, 4, 5
Let it return from five,
go to the crossing of five roads!
1, 2, 3
Let it return from three,
go to the crossing of three roads!
1
Let it return from one!
Thus was the incantation,
as expected.
Not my hand,
Ayša-Batman's hand.

sky – are: *džir*, *su*, *kük*, and the attributes are *džirän*, *sugan*, *kügän*. In the Tatar original, these three lines are as follows: *džir iyäse – džirän sakal / su iyäse – sugan sakal / kük iyäse – kügän sakal*.

²²⁶ The words ‘remains (i.e. leftovers)’ (*kaldığı*) and ‘captivity’ (*koldığı*) appear next to each other because of their rhyming rather than their meaning. The concept of captivity or imprisonment, however, may be explained by the notion that in Tatar, a disease grabs or holds the patient (Tatar *tot-*).

²²⁷ Incantation against abscesses in the armpit and groin.

Tul. 379²²⁸

Eat me not,
drink me not!
Eat and drink these here!

Sof. 40²²⁹

*Bismillägi-rraxmani-rraximi*²³⁰

(or:)

One God! (*Ber Tängre!*)

This ... (child's name) here
Has got *očan*.
I heal the *očan*.
1, 3, 5, 7, 9
Go to the dust!
Phwoo!

This ... (child's name) here
Has got *očan*.
I heal the *očan*.
1, 3, 5, 7
Go to the earth!
Phwoo!

This ... (child's name) here
Has got *očan*.
I heal the *očan*.
1, 3, 5
Begone!

²²⁸ They recited this incantation at a forest spring or by a yet unknown body of water, while throwing a hair or a small piece of their clothing into the water. Then they had to spit three times.

²²⁹ Incantation against flatulence in infancy (*očan*).

²³⁰ This is how the Arabic form 'basmala' was noted down on the basis of Tatar pronunciation.

Phwoo!

This ... (child's name) here

Has got *očan*.

I heal the *očan*.

1, 3

Fly away!

Phwoo!

This ... (child's name) here

Has got *očan*.

I heal the *očan*.

1

Shrink back from one!

The Sun leaves,

the Moon leaves,

from this person (patient's name) here

let the *očan* leave!

The healing (*ime-tomo*) be like this!

Whence thou came,

go thither!

Begone!

Phwoo!

Sof. 41²³¹

Like a cloud in the sky

dissipates,

on this (patient's name) here

let the *očan* dissipate!

Like froth on water

dissipates,

²³¹ The second incantation recited when curing the *očan*, the so-called *očan tele* 'očan's incantation'.

on this (patient's name) here
let the *očan* dissipate!
Like the yellow butter in a pan
melts away,
on this (patient's name) here
let the *očan* melt away!
This *očan*,
like butter, melt away
like ashes, be scattered!

The healing (*ime-tomo*)
be this!
Whence it came,
may it go thither!

Sof. 42²³²

Like this spider
is squished,
let this (child's name) *očan*
be squished,
be over with!

The healing (*ime-tomo*)
be thus!
Whence it came,
may it go thither!

Sof. 43²³³

Stye!
This to thee!²³⁴
This to thee,

²³² Incantation recited when curing the *očan* with a spider.

²³³ Incantation against stye.

²³⁴ Here, the healer shows a fig (in Bashkir incantations, 'showing a fig' itself also appears in the texts, e.g. BashText 154–156; Khisam III, 36).

this, this, this!
 Be ashamed!
 Shrink!
 Be over with!
 Onto the eyes of this one (patient's name)
 come out not!

Sof. 44/1²³⁵

This (patient's name) has got a boil.
 I heal the boil.
 When the bottom of the pan has got a boil,
 then this (patient's name) have a boil!
 Phwoo! (blows)

Sof. 44/2²³⁶

When the bath-stone²³⁷
 has got a boil,
 then this (patient's name) here
 may have a boil!

When the poking iron
 has got a boil,
 then this (patient's name) here
 may have a boil!
 Phwoo! (blows)

Sof. 44/3²³⁸

The healing (*ime-tomo*) be this!
 Whence it came,
 thither may it go!

²³⁵ First incantation to remove boils and furuncles.

²³⁶ Second incantation to heal boils and furuncles.

²³⁷ The bath-stone is a stone used in the bath, which is heated and water is poured on it to make hot steam.

²³⁸ Third incantation to remove boils and furuncles.

Sof. 48²³⁹

This (patient's name)
has got *ziyandaš*.
I heal the *ziyandaš*.

A black cloud is coming.
Under the black cloud
a black cow is coming.
Her horns reach the sky,
her udder reaches the ground.
From one udder comes blood,
from the other comes butter.
Eat that,
drink that!
Touch not this person,
hurt him not!
(The healer blows and spits.)

A red cloud is coming.
Under the red cloud
a red cow is coming.
Her horns reach the sky,
her udder reaches the ground.
From one udder comes blood,
from the other comes butter.
Eat that,
drink that!
Touch not this person,
hurt him not!
(The healer blows and spits.)

²³⁹ Incantation against *ziyandaš*. The Bashkir incantation against epilepsy (*būuma*) is rather similar to this one (BashText 250).

A white cloud is coming.
 Under the white cloud
 a white cow is coming.
 Her horns reach the sky,
 her udder reaches the ground.
 From one udder comes blood,
 from the other comes butter.
 Eat that,
 drink that!
 Touch not this person,
 hurt him not!
 (The healer blows and spits.)

The healing (*ime-tomo*) be this!

Sof. 52²⁴⁰

Here is fever for thee,
 a soul for a soul,
 a head for a head!
 Grab not this person now!
 Grab this doll!

Sofi. 684²⁴¹

Oh, God!
 Give my family health,
 give a long life!
 Give calm
 and protect it from all kinds of troubles
 and perils!

²⁴⁰ Incantation to heal fever (*šom*). A doll made for this occasion was circled around the patient's head three times while it was recited.

²⁴¹ Prayer recited during an animal sacrifice offered to the *kiremet* by Christian Tatars. What is interesting about this prayer text is that it invokes God (and not the *kiremet*); what is more, in the form *Allah*. I provide a similar record under Kobl. 458.

Mythical stories

Bál. 60²⁴²

The house elf

I saw the house elf once when I was little; once I woke up at night, having to go out, I woke up and started to cry; the Moon was shining very brightly and it seemed to me that my mother was spinning on the side bench. I started to cry and she frightened me, showing me her fist; fearing that my mother would beat me, I went back to bed and meanwhile I saw my father and mother; she was sleeping. I, too, fell asleep, scared. The next day, I asked my mother: “Why were you spinning at night?” “I was not spinning”, she answered. The house elf showed up to me in the shape of my mother and I did not recognise it.

Bál. 62²⁴³

The water elf

Once I went swimming to the water with Očīb, our servant. Going into the water, I first swam to the other shore and then I started back towards this shore. When I got to the middle of the water, the water swept me and something began to pull at my leg. I tried not to give in, but it pulled me ever harder; at last I shouted to Očīb, while the water elf plunged me into the water. What happened afterwards I know not, only when I opened my eyes lying on the shore, and Očīb was there, too. I asked him how he had pulled me out. “By your hair”, he answered. My leg was blackened where the water elf had pulled on it.

²⁴² Recorded by Simon Gäürläulī Boris on the basis of Uncle Kōžmä’s account.

²⁴³ Recorded by Simon Gäürläulī Boris on the basis of Bečley’s account from Öčnarat village.

Bál. 63²⁴⁴

The witch's push

When I was once sleeping outside in the summer, I woke up at night and it was coming at me as if somebody was holding my neck with his hands. Frightened, I wrapped my fur coat tightly around myself. But in spite of that, something was squeezing my neck; I became numb and terrified, and after I lay there for a while, it was gone. The next day I told others about this and they said: "You have been pushed".

Bál. 64²⁴⁵

The witch

As our turn to die approached our house, the *mullah* forbade me to sleep at night. I lay there for a long time; towards midnight I felt very sleepy, but I endured it as much as I had to. Lying there a little more, I saw a fire in the shape of a sphere enter our house without opening the door and it stretched out very long, so one end of it was in the bucket of water next to the door and the other in the children's mouths. It visited each one in turn, then my turn came; I prayed as best as I could and started to struggle; it wanted to part my mouth with two hands; I had been struggling with it for a long time, when the cock crowed, and then it disappeared. The next morning I woke up very early, but I couldn't get up; I didn't have any strength, then I became mute and my mouth was torn and festering. When the children woke up they all wanted to go to the bucket to have a drink of water; I dragged myself to the bucket and tipped the water out. After this, the plague in the village ended, and the children also recovered.

²⁴⁴ Recorded by Simon Gäürläulī Boris.

²⁴⁵ In 1870, there was a deadly epidemic in a village, which was attributed to the *ubir*. A memorat about it was recorded by Simon Gäürläulī Boris on the basis of a Tatar man's account.

Kobl. 426

[The stable spirit]

In my father's time, we used to keep bay horses. Some eight years after his death, I slaughtered one of the bay horses, because it was working badly, and bought instead a good, raven black horse. But in vain did I feed this new one all I could, it was just withering away. When I bought it, its mane was nice and curly like other horses', but now it was getting limper and shorter every day. After a year, I sold this horse, although only at half price, and bought instead a bay one, whose colour matched the other animals. Now I know very well that I must not bring a black coloured animal into the farmyard, be it horse, cow or sheep. In the farmyard, the *abzar eyäse* does not like black livestock and will kill them.

Kobl. 427-428²⁴⁶

[*Bičura*]

In 1863, my father was working as a miller in the mill next to the Yunusov inn near the village Mordva. Once, at eleven p.m., he came out of the mill and headed towards the workers' quarters, where there were two other people then: a Russian muzhik and his fifteen-year-old son. Around midnight, when my father was not asleep yet, a woman not taller than half an arshin,²⁴⁷ with an *irpaq*²⁴⁸ on her head, lowered herself from the ceiling, and went to my father's feet. He quickly pulled his feet under himself, which made the woman fall down onto the floor, with a thump as if a two-pood weight had fallen.

A few minutes later, the Russian boy suddenly started to gasp and make noises in his sleep as if he were having a nightmare or being pushed. Undoubtedly, the *bičura* that had come down from the ceiling pushed the boy. When my father awoke him, the boy told him that he had been pushed hard in his sleep.

²⁴⁶ Koblov's note: a Tatar had heard this story from his father.

²⁴⁷ Old measure of length; one arshin is approximately 0.7 m.

²⁴⁸ Traditional Tatar female headdress.

Kobl. 428

[*Bičura*]

In the village of Kiskya asti, in the Laishev district, a *bičura* lived in the appointed Mullah's house. The mullah was getting richer by the day. His money and his livestock were accumulating. His livestock were fat and healthy. It turned out that the *bičura* was hoarding money for him at night, stealing it from the neighbours, and it fed the horses oats that it had taken from the neighbours' granary. When the mullah was rich enough and did not need the *bičura* anymore, he decided to oust it from his house. Therefore, the mullah invited a magician from another Tatar village to get rid of the *bičura*. As soon as the magician stepped through the door, the mullah's farm buildings caught fire. This fire was caused neither by arson nor by carelessness. After five or six hours, the mullah was destitute. Everything was burnt: his house, his wealth, his livestock. However, the neighbours' houses were all unharmed.

Kobl. 432

[*Šüräle*]

Once, my grandfather went to work in the forest. At that time, the forest wasn't like now, it was very big and very dense. As he was working, he suddenly heard a voice calling him. My grandfather was not scared, so he followed the voice. He went on and on, and the voice seemed to call from further inside, from the thick of the forest. When it started to get dark, grandfather wanted to go home, but he could not, because he always arrived back to the same place. So grandpa wandered all night, but he couldn't get out of the forest. He only got out at noon the next day, but he did not get to his own village, but in a completely different direction, to a Votyak village about fifteen versts²⁴⁹ from our village.

When night fell and my grandfather was still not home, his father and mother began to worry. They gathered their relatives and neighbours and set out to find my grandfather. They went into the

²⁴⁹ A verst is an old measure of length, about 1067 metres.

forest and indeed found the place where he had been working, but he was nowhere to be seen. They began shouting but there was no answer. They looked for him, but nothing. They thought he may have gone to the next village to visit his relatives and would return soon. But his mother was still worried and sent her husband to the mullah to ask him to pray for their son and offer a sacrifice so that God would protect him from Satan. As the mullah began to pray, my grandfather returned home, skinny and sick. He slept all day and the next day he recounted that the cunning *şüräle* had lured him into the thick of the forest and he wandered through the forest all night following the *şüräle*'s voice without even seeing it. Therefore, my grandfather could not tell what the *şüräle* looked like.

Kobl. 437-438

[*Albastî*]

“Once”, recounts a student of the school in Kazan, “one night during Ramadan, I went to bed after dinner. I dreamt that I was going to the mosque to pray. When I entered the mosque, the mullah and the people were already there, praying. Suddenly, I saw a big, strong, old beggar, who came up to me roughly and started to push me. I choked, then I lost consciousness. I wanted to cry for help, but no sound came out of my mouth. A few minutes later, the *albastî* left and I cried with fear and woke up. I felt tormented and tired. The next day I fell ill.

Kobl. 441-442 ²⁵⁰

[*Öräk*]

One day, a woman was travelling along the edge of a forest. All around was quiet and she did not meet anyone on the way. A river bend crossed the road, which continued in a fairly long bridge. It was called the “Genie’s Bridge”. When she reached the bridge, she

²⁵⁰ A Christian Tatar woman recounted her encounter with the *öräk*. Koblov recorded the account in the third person singular, which form I have retained in my translation.

saw a man standing on it in white Cheremis dress, resting his elbows on the railing.

The woman was slowly approaching the bridge, ignoring the itinerant old man. She thought she'd just pass him by. But not so! The man begged her to give him a lift, but she drove on. He remained there, leaning onto the railings of the bridge. When the woman passed the bend in the river, she looked back at the old man. At that moment, he turned into a fireball, which approached the wagon in circles, and then turned into a little girl, who got up on the wagon in the blinking of an eye.

As soon as the girl got on the wagon, the horse reared. Frightened, the woman began to invoke the saints to help; she started to pray and recited all the prayers she knew, but the girl would not get off the wagon. She just sat there quietly, with her eyes wide open. The woman drove on, but the horse was struggling as if it had to pull 15 poods,²⁵¹ and the girl was just sitting on the wagon. The horse was exhausted and foaming and stopped at every step. Knowing that it wasn't simply a little girl, the woman was losing her mind with fear. She just prayed and prayed, Our Father, Hail Mary, but it helped not at all.

Getting furious, the woman started cursing and swearing and beating the girl with her stick, accompanying every blow by an awful rude curse. Then the girl got off the wagon and threatened the woman, saying that she would not get home alive. When the woman heard this, she punched and cursed her even harder. Eventually, the woman was running out of strength. So she left the girl, sat back on the wagon and set off, with the girl running after her, just a single step behind. She tormented her in this way for another two hours.

Just then, the woman remembered that in such cases, the horse must be harnessed backwards, with its head towards the wagon. So she did that. And the strange girl disappeared at that moment. The woman sat there for another hour in fear of what had happened, then

²⁵¹ The pood is an old measure of weight; one pood is more than 16 kg.

harnessed the horse properly again as it had been before and drove on. That is how she escaped from the *öräk* and returned safely to her village.

Kobl. 449

[*Yuza*]

A mullah went to mow the meadow with his family. When he was done with the first row and was about to go back to start the second one, he heard some noise from the reeds in the marsh. The mullah took the pitchfork and went towards the noise, when he saw a great big snake, which was pulling him towards itself with the air. First, the mullah did not resist at all, and the snake was just pulling him across the air towards its mouth. Then, the mullah stuck the pitchfork into the snake's mouth, gaining a little time in this way. But then, the snake wrapped its tail around the mullah and strangled him, although it was also killed by the wound caused by the pitchfork.

Kobl. 450

[*Yuza*]

A skinny cat often visited the village. People would always chase this cat away, no one wanted to take it home. Once an old woman, when she saw the cat, picked it up and took it home with her. Although her husband, the muzhik, threw the cat out, the old woman brought it back into the house at night. When she fell asleep, the cat started bouncing back and forth, running on the tables, on the floor, and upset everything. The muzhik woke up and awoke their son, too. Then the cat suddenly turned into a snake. Terrified, the muzhik tried to wake his wife, but she did not wake up. The snake strangled the muzhik and his son as well, then left. The old woman got up in the morning and saw that both the muzhik and their son were lying on the ground. She wanted to wake them up, but they were already dead.

Mak. 14

[The water spirit]

Once a girl went to fetch water and saw that a pig was walking into the river, which wasn't very deep, grunting. She paid no attention to it but started scooping up the water. Suddenly, she saw that the waters of the river parted and the pig sank into the water and disappeared. The frightened girl ran home quickly and told her family what she had seen. The whole village ran down to the river with her to beat the pig, but there was no pig to be seen there.

Mak. 15

[The water spirit]

The story goes that once a Christian Tatar was walking on the dam next to the mill at dusk and saw somebody bathing in the mill-lake and combing her hair. The bather had a very beautiful face, a snow-white, clean body and long, pitch-black hair. As the Christian was approaching her, she dived into the water and melted into the water. The Christian was a bold man and went to the part of the lake where that somebody had disappeared. He found a huge golden comb on the shore, picked it up and went home. The Christian hid it in the treasure chest as a rare and expensive thing and locked it with a pad-lock. The water spirit, seeing that the Christian had taken its comb, followed his footsteps to his house. When the Christian went into the house, it followed him. The next night, the water spirit went to the Christian's house, knocked on the wall, woke up the Christian and told him strictly: "Give me back my comb! Put it right back where you took it from!"

The Christian did not listen to the water spirit, in vain did it say to him what it would do, the comb remained with the Christian. On the third night, the water spirit went to the Christian's house again and said: "Give me back my comb! Put it right back where you took it from! If you do not, I will kill you or collapse your house onto you!"

The Christian was frightened, so he got up early the next morning, took the comb, went to the mill-lake and put the comb back where he had found it. Then he ran to the other side and watched

what the water spirit would do. As soon as the Christian put the comb down, the water spirit came out of the water, took the comb and dived down into the water again.

Mak. 16-17

[The water spirit]

An old woman was travelling with her granddaughter to the neighbouring village. The granddaughter was pregnant. On their way, they had to cross a large bridge, where they stopped to rest. The bridge arched over a big river. The granddaughter told her grandmother, among other things, that she was going to give birth soon. The grandmother said to her: "Granddaughter! I want to be your midwife when you deliver your baby; invite me to be the midwife!" The granddaughter didn't want this and said to her grandmother: "Why should I call you to be the midwife, I would rather that the water's master be the midwife!"

A little time passed and the young woman felt that she was about to give birth. They called a midwife, but she could not help her deliver, they called a second and a third one, but none of them came to help. The mother-to-be was in great agony, so they called the priest. The priest asked: "What makes you suffer so greatly? Did you not make a promise that you have not fulfilled?" She then remembered: "Once I said something thoughtless to my grandmother before giving birth; when she asked me to be my midwife, I said: » Why should I call you to be the midwife, I would rather that the water's master be the midwife!«"

The priest left. Then they sent for the spirit of the water to be the midwife. A great big burly man was sent to the place where the young woman had said those memorable words. He started calling the water's master to the birth. After the third call, the water parted and the water's master agreed to deliver the baby.

It arrived, did its duty as midwife and helped deliver the baby. When the baby was born, they called the priest to determine the baby's name. The priest came and recited the appropriate prayer. During the prayer, the master of the water was seen in the shape of the midwife. When the prayer was finished, it returned to its watery realm.

Mak. 18²⁵²

[The forest spirit]

The master of the forest goes up to the man who is going through the forest and asks him for bread. If it is given some, it is very glad. When a man gives bread to the forest's master, it says: "Now I will grab neither you nor your children".

Mak. 22-23²⁵³

[Pärey]

Early in the morning, I was passing by the bath dug into the ground and heard somebody taking a steam bath. I went nearer to the bath and heard somebody beating himself with the whisk, but I didn't see any steam or fog. I was surprised and scared, too, and was about to leave the bath when a white-clad man came out of there and called me to him, saying "Come, let's have a steam bath!" Hearing this invitation, I ran over to the other side, terrified, but suddenly, that man was also there, standing as if his legs had taken root in the ground. I could feel that I was unable to move, neither forwards nor backwards, and everything got dark before my eyes.

I realised that I could not leave that place, so I lay down in the grass and had a feeling that a lot of people were passing me by. They were all surprised and said: "Unless the *pärey* has touched him... why is he lying there?" I could feel all this, but I couldn't speak, my tongue refused to work.

While I was lying there, those at home started to look for me but couldn't find me. An old man happened to find me, and because he knew that they were already looking for me, he led me home. My family at home realised that I had memory loss because the *pärey* had grabbed me. They called a healer, who healed me with magic.

²⁵² Maksimov's addition: "A Christian told me this".

²⁵³ Maksimov's addition: "This is how a Christian I know told me about seeing a *pärey*".

Mak. 24-25

[Changeling]

I also knew a boy who was said to be a devil (*pärey*) child. He was only a few years old when he would already sit in a hut dug into the ground. He was very ugly in appearance; his face was black, his head elongated, his eyes black and large, his neck long and thin. He would always go barefoot. Christians said that the reason the boy looked so strange was because he was a child of *päreys*. The ghost-parents changed him for a Christian child when it was put down in the bath dug into the earth and left unattended. This boy always had foamy teeth. When he played with his mates in the street, at the end of the game he would always say “Well, I’m going to my own” and went into the hut dug into the ground. When people met this boy on the road, he would always throw stones at them. This boy died at the age of fifteen.

Mak. 27²⁵⁴

[Pärey]

In winter, a seventeen-year-old girl went to the bath with her friends. After bathing, she went out to have a little rest. There, she allowed a *pärey* to entice her away and take her to the threshing-yard near the village.

The bewitched girl’s friends came out of the bath and couldn’t find her. They were very frightened and set out to look for her around the village. It was already night when they found her in the threshing-yard. Already, the cock was crowing. When they asked the girl why she had gone to the threshing-yard, she replied: “I was brought here by the *päreys*, I walked with them to the wedding and if you hadn’t found me, I would have already married one of the *päreys*”. In that case, the girl would have turned into a *pärey* herself.

²⁵⁴ Maksimov’s remark: “Christian Tatars told this”.

Mak. 28-29²⁵⁵

[*Albasti*]

“We had” she told me, “a very fine horse. One evening, the horse broke out of the yard and galloped to the field. I ran after him. While I was chasing the horse, night fell. I was a little scared. Then I noticed someone coming towards me from afar on a troika. I was very happy because I thought I was no longer alone in the field and headed there to meet the troika. As I approached, I noticed that some fiery mass was floating in front of me, which suddenly began to grow, already resembling a large stack. That is when I realised it was the *albasti*. I was very frightened and ran home quickly, crying and praying very hard. The *albasti*, after I made it clear that I was a Christian, did not dare come closer to me, it was just trying to impress me with a loud noise in the form of the wind. I was so filled with fear after meeting the *albasti*”, the woman concluded her story “that I was ill for two weeks after that.”

Mész. 45-46

[*Ubir*]

What Kazan Tatars call an *ubir* is a will-o'-the-wisp. It can be seen as a fire flaring up in cemeteries and on roads. Suicide victims and people freezing or dying on the road become *ubirs*, who get onto the wagon at night and make it so heavy that the horse sweats and can hardly pull it. First, the Tatar driver prays from the Koran to make it leave him alone, but when prayer has no effect, he starts swearing, which makes it disappear at last. Cholera is also caused by the *ubir*; it goes from house to house and licks the soles of the feet of the people while they sleep, which kills them all by morning.

²⁵⁵ Maksimov's remark: “This is how a Christian Tatar woman told me about her meeting the *albasti*”.

Mész. 49

[*Bičura*]

... has a human form and does every job possible at the order of its master. Only it can't spin a rope from sand and can't fetch water in a sieve. If people get bored with it in the house, they usually ask it to do those things in order to get rid of its nagging, as it's always asking its master for jobs to do.

Mész. 51

[*Šüräle*]

Kazan Tatars call this forest-walking imaginary being *šüräle* or *ur-man-anasī* (forest's mother). It is imagined to have a protruding forehead, sunken eyes and shaggy hair, it joins a man walking in the forests, invites him to play tickles, and kills him while tickling.

Mész. 103-104²⁵⁶

[**The swallow, the mosquito and the snake**]

[...] In the ark, there was a pair of every kind of animal on earth. Of all of them, the mouse began to carve the bottom of the ark and carved it until there was a hole, and water began to pour in. As soon as the snake noticed the trouble, it coiled and lay on the hole, stopping the water pouring in. For this reason, the prophet Nüy loved the snake very much, and told him that whichever animal's flesh and blood he desired to eat, he would give it to him. The snake sent the mosquito to taste which animal's blood was the best and brought the news of it. The mosquito found man's blood to taste the best. On its way back to the snake with the message, it met a swallow. The swallow asked him where he had been. The mosquito told the whole story and said that it found man's blood to taste the best.

²⁵⁶ This is a summary of a legend of origin recorded among the Tatars of the Simbirsk governorate. Mészáros recorded a similar legend among the Chuvash (Mész. 103). However, there, it was God's order that the snake feed on man's blood – further on, the story is quite similar: to stop the messenger mosquito telling it to the snake, the swallow pinches out the mosquito's tongue.

“Show me your tongue”, said the swallow.

As soon as the mosquito showed its tongue, the swallow plucked it out of its mouth. Then both of them returned to the snake. All the mosquito could say was *bežž-bežž*. It can say nothing else as it has no tongue.

The snake asks:

“What is this mosquito saying?”

The swallow replies:

“It says that the frog’s blood tasted the best.”

“The snake grew angry about this and wanted to catch the swallow, snatched at it, but could only pinch a piece out of the end of its tail.

Sof. 50-51

[The fever]

In a village, there lived two very different men. One of them was meek and good, conscientious and very religious. Every morning and every night, and every time he began or finished a job, he prayed all the time. The other was quite the opposite: he was quarrelsome, bad and lazy, and not only did he not believe in God and did not pray, but he would also swear with unbecoming words.

Once, two fever-girlfriends appeared in the houses of these men, both at the same time, when they were preparing to eat dinner. Both girlfriends took the form of a fly, flew into the houses and circled around the dinner table. The religious man sat down at the table and started to spoon the dinner. The fly was watching and quickly sat at the edge of the spoon, hoping that it could get into the man’s mouth unnoticed, and then further inside him. But just then, as was his custom, the religious man started to pray, while the fly-fever got stuck in the food on the spoon. The man saw this and immediately recognised that it was no ordinary fly but the fever, and decided to teach it a lesson. He did not take the food off the spoon, but put the spoon, together with the food and the fly-fever into the spoon sack, where the spoons were kept. He put it in with the other spoons, closed the sack while saying a prayer, and did not take it out again for a whole month. What happened to the fever was exactly what

usually happens to people when they are ill: it shook and shivered in the spoon sack. After a month, the fever escaped from the sack at last and, being glad about it, went far away from that house.

Its girlfriend was much luckier. Going into the faithless man's house, it could get into his mouth and from there, into his stomach, as the man did not notice it because it did not pray. During the next month, the fever tortured and tormented the sick man in every which way it wanted; it ate all the fat from him and sucked him completely dry, so that he became totally weakened and emaciated.

Tul. 309²⁵⁷

Aždaḡa

The *aždaḡa* is as big as the minaret of a mosque. I myself saw it in 1945. It was brought by a cloud, a big black cloud brought it. At that time, I was the leader of a brigade, I directed the sowing. It started to rain, I went under a tree with the men. They told me that a large snake had fallen from the cloud into a precipice and then the cloud lifted it up again. The shepherds told that there was a strong wind, which even tore up the trees. This snake lives on earth and it seems that it came to do damage to people. There are such places, my grandfather told me, Mount Kaz. This came from there, too, and the cloud takes it back there. It must live where there are no people.

Tul. 310²⁵⁸

[*Yuḡa*]

If a snake lives for a hundred years, it turns into a big dragon, a *yuḡa*. From a snake, it can turn into various animals. Once lived a muzhik. Once, when he was walking along the river, he saw a very beautiful girl on its bank. He asked her to marry him, and she agreed. They went home to the man's house and went to bed at night. During the night, the muzhik woke up to a strange noise, opened his eyes and saw that the girl had turned into a snake and was drinking water

²⁵⁷ Story told by Kuzyakaev Maryam of Krasnoyar, born in 1917.

²⁵⁸ Story told by R. N. Sharifovna of Tanyp, born in 1924.

from the cauldron. In the morning, he said to his wife: “Let’s go to the barn and I’ll show you my wealth”. She agreed. They went into the barn and the muzhik came out unnoticed, locked the woman in and set fire to the barn. The *yuxa* was burnt inside it.

Tul. 328²⁵⁹

The water bull

The *su ügez* is the water bull. I haven’t seen it, I have only been told about it. It pulls you into the water. In Işkil, it dragged in a man, and also an old woman. It must have its nest there, in the water. There was a lake where stood a mill. That old woman, when she was drowning there, she was saved. There, on that day, a pit was formed. It half dragged a man into that pit, where it could not drag the old woman completely. It always drowns people in pairs, a man and a woman in the same place, but not necessarily on the same day.

Tul. 329/1²⁶⁰

The forest’s master

The forest’s master (*urman xudža*) exists. It has caused people to fall ill. Trees also have masters. They can also make you ill if you cut down the tree. A prayer must be said in order to be healed.

Tul. 329/2²⁶¹

The forest’s master

The forest’s master exists. That is what the whirlwind is called. It cannot be seen. They go to the forest and come out ill. It means that they originate (the illness) from the forest’s master.

If you lose your way, you have to put on your shirt on back to front and then you get home (safe and sound). If you cut down a tree, fell a tree, you must always say a prayer. Every tree has its own master.

²⁵⁹ From data provider B. Maftukhi of Bruyuzl, born in 1909.

²⁶⁰ From data provider Akhmatrizy of Ishimova village, born in 1936.

²⁶¹ From data provider M. Nazima of Bereznik, born in 1942.

Tul. 330²⁶²

The forest's master

Urman χudža – this is the forest's master. If you lose your way in the forest, you must say "I have got lost, show me the way!" And you must turn your clothes back to front. It is invisible but can be heard breaking small branches.

Tul. 340/1²⁶³

The house's master

Yes, they say that in the village, there is house's master spirit. You must say a prayer on Thursday, or maybe on Wednesday, so that there will be peace and quiet in the house, so that the spirit will be satisfied with the family. Prayer is the food of the house spirit. If you do something bad, the house's master will get angry. You must not anger it – if you do bad, trouble will come to the house. It is invisible to the eye; if it is visible, it is not the house's master but the *šaytan*.

Tul. 340/2²⁶⁴

The house's master

There are different kinds of house's masters; there are good ones and bad ones. The bad ones attack people and cause them diseases. Such ones must be chased away with prayers; a prayer from the Koran must be hung on the wall.

Tul. 340/3²⁶⁵

The house's master

The house's master can be a bird or a snake, too; therefore, if you meet a grass snake, you must not kill it. The house's master can

²⁶² From data provider M. Yunusa of Fedork, born in 1928.

²⁶³ In Tanyp, from data provider I. Kifai, born in 1922.

²⁶⁴ In Chalkovo village, from data provider Z. Khalisy, born in 1921.

²⁶⁵ In Chalkovo village, from data provider A. Nasii, born in 1937.

be either good or bad. The *yort xudža* is the house's as well as the bath's master.

Tul. 340/4²⁶⁶

The house's master

The house's master cannot be seen. A prayer must be said to him; therefore, a mullah is usually called. But you can also give it money and pray in that way. If no prayer is said to it, the members of the household may fall ill or become impoverished.

Tul. 341²⁶⁷

The house's master

They told that if the members of the household were good, then the house's master was like that, too. If the family misbehaves, so does the house's master. You must conduct yourself properly, you must not curse, or else the house spirit will inflict a disease upon you.

Tul. 357²⁶⁸

Šaytan

The bath's master, that is the *šaytan*. I myself have seen it. It was small and shaggy. It has arms and legs and bristles like a pig; it is not really big.

I was lying in bed with my wife, she was pregnant then. It wasn't totally dark, the moon was shining. The *šaytan* very quietly stole onto the bed. I saw it sneaking. When it was on the bed, my wife started to moan. They say that the *šaytan* goes up to pregnant women. I gave it a kick, so it went behind the stove and rattled there for some time afterwards.

²⁶⁶ In Mostovya village, from data provider U. Naziry, born in 1914.

²⁶⁷ In Krasnoyarsk, from data provider A. Nakiby, born in 1919.

²⁶⁸ From data provider K. Fayzi of Sultanay, born in 1930.

Tul. 360²⁶⁹

Šaytan

Some people say that the *šaytan* is big and has one eye, and others say it's small. It lives in the house or in the bath. You must not go into the bath at midnight, nor at dusk. The *šaytan* takes away people's minds.

Tul. 365/1²⁷⁰

Šaytan

The *šaytan* lives in the bath and in the privy. We must go into these places while saying a prayer.

Grandfather was alone and he once hid in the stable. A storm broke out then, and all the impure forces were gathering there in that barn. They may have been Russian impure forces or Tatar ones. Tatar impure forces try not to grab Muslims.

Tul. 365/2²⁷¹

Šaytan

The *šaytan* is in the bath and it pushes people. The *šaytan* cannot be seen; it may be among us even now.

There are fat people and skinny ones. There are *šaytans* with them, too; fewer with men and more with women. If somebody does not say “*bismillā*” before a meal and leaves some food on the plate, the *šaytan* eats it. If the person later eats of that food, he cannot be healed any more. He is said to eat after the *šaytan*. That is why a well-fed man is called a good man.

The *šaytan* can also be seen in the form of a dog or a cat.

²⁶⁹ From data provider Z. Khalisy of Chalkovo, born in 1921.

²⁷⁰ From data providers Z. Salikhy of Uymuzh, born in 1898 and I. Maukudy, born in 1928.

²⁷¹ From data provider S. Fazili of Ust'tuntor, born in 1928.

Tul. 367²⁷²

džen-päri

The *džen-päri* is like the *šaytan*. This strong wind is the whirlwind. If it twists around you, you will fall ill and you may even die. The *päri* does not go into the house.

Tul. 368/1²⁷³

Džen-päri

These live in the privy, they feed there. They don't live anywhere else. It is better not to see them because then you will fall ill. It can also take the form of man or can be seen as an animal, too.

Tul. 368/2²⁷⁴

Ubir and šaytan

The *ubir* is a *šaytan*, too. This is what they called people who ate a lot. There are also *ubirs* in the cemetery. If somebody eats a lot without saying "*bismillä*", the *šaytan* will go into that person. He will become an *ubir*. After he dies, it will come out to eat through the opening under the head in the grave. There, a stick from a juniper bush must be driven into the ground.

When it comes out through the hole, it mocks. You eat – the *šaytan* eats that. When you die, it comes out through the hole.

Tul. 368/3²⁷⁵

Ubir

They say there used to be *ubirs*. They would go into the houses and suck blood through people's heels. The healers could save the people. A bear's claw had to be put on such people so that the *ubir* would not go onto them, or sewn into their clothes.

²⁷² From data provider N. Fagili of Bereznik, born in 1926.

²⁷³ From data provider T. Razhap of Fedorky, born in 1910.

²⁷⁴ From data provider N. Fagili of Bereznik, born in 1926.

²⁷⁵ From data provider I. Kifai of Tanyp, born in 1922.