

FUNERAL CUSTOMS OF CAUCASIAN ESTONIANS

Marika Mikkor

Published originally as: Marika Mikkor, 'Funeral Customs of Caucasian Estonians', *Folklore*, 5 (Tartu, 1997), 47–96.

The original version is available at <http://www.folklore.ee/folklore/>

Translated by Tiia Haud.

Some corrections have been made later by the author in 2012.

Linguistic corrections in the translation have been made later by Andres Aule in 2012.

FUNERAL CUSTOMS OF CAUCASIAN ESTONIANS

Marika Mikkor

Introduction

Customs characterising a people or an ethnic group depend on the stage of development of the society, dominant religion and ethnic environment. In an ethnological study of settlers their origin, time of emigration and ethnic composition of settlements should be taken into account. Of the Estonian villages in the Caucasus, the village of Estonia was founded in 1882 by the Estonians from the province (*guberniya*) of Samara, who had left Estonia in the 1850s and 1860s. The villages of Salme and Sulevi were founded in Abkhazia in 1884 and 1885, respectively, by Estonian peasants, who arrived from the county of Harjumaa (Estonia); the village of Punase-Lageda (Estosadok) was founded in the Sochi region in 1886 by Estonians — resettling from the North Caucasian settlement of Eesti-Haginsk (Esto-Khaginskoye) — who had left Estonia in the 1870s¹ (Võime 1980, 16–18, 21; Võime 1974, 120, 121). In the second half of the 19th century, in the conditions of the arising capitalism, the first settlers of the villages were peasants whose resettlement was favoured by the imperial government. In addition to the first settlers, new emigrants kept coming both from different regions of Estonia and from other Estonian settlements in Russia. At the same time, there were also leavers. Within the boundaries of one village there lived, side by side, people from different parishes and counties of Estonia. The parochial origins of Estonian settlers would be a separate topic of research. For example, at Sulevi, descendants of peasants from Kuusalu parish (northern Estonia) and Rõuge parish (south-eastern Estonia) married each other.

Settlements were founded on lands abandoned by the Abkhaz and Circassian peoples, who had been killed or forced to leave as a consequence of the Russian Empire's colonial policies and the resulting wars and unrest. On the arrival of Estonians, fruit trees running wild and village lanes overgrowing with weeds were the only signs indicating the one-time presence of the natives, who had been killed off or fled to Turkey. The imperial government populated the conquered lands with Orthodox refugees of the Russo–Turkish wars: Bul-

¹ The article also contains some observations about the villages of Alam-Linda (Kvemo Linda), Ülem-Linda and Leselidze in Abkhazia.

garians, Moldovans, Greeks and Armenians, who came from Turkey and areas under its influence (Volkova 1978, 20, 15; Roos 1992, 73–78), and Lutheran economic fugitives: Estonians, Latvians and Germans. Next to the Estonians at Punase-Lageda there was a Greek village; the villages of Salme and Sulevi adjoined Moldovan and Armenian villages; the village of Estonia had Armenian and Bulgarian villages as its neighbours; the village of Ülem-Linda was close to Latvian, German and Greek villages. All those people were land-tillers.

Until the 1920s, the main language of communication between different peoples in Abkhazia was Turkish (Volkova 1978, 45), which the Estonians could not speak. This difference was accompanied by the dissimilarity of religion. That was the reason for the lack of any closer social intercourse with Orthodox peoples.² The Estonian settlements were closed 'islands' with their own schools, societies and Lutheran traditions. Despite the distance, their communication with the native land was quite lively.

The Soviet regime brought along a ban on ecclesiastical rituals, the establishment of collective households and the closure of Estonian schools at the Estonian settlements in the Caucasus in the 1920s and 1930s. In 1937 and 1938, many Estonian intellectuals and wealthier proprietors were executed. The end of the 1930s brought along an influx of Armenians of Turkish origin to Estonian villages. In the 1940s and 1950s, there was an all-Georgian campaign of resettlement of mountain tribes to the plains, in the course of which Mingrelians and Svans arrived in great numbers to Estonian settlements in Abkhazia. The mountain tribes, adhering to Eastern Christianity, had, until their very resettlement, retained strong features of the feudal system, and in their native territory, they had mainly lived on hunting and cattle-breeding (Volkova 1978, 12, 20–22).³ The main neighbours of Estonians in the villages of Salme, Sulevi and Estonia were Georgians and Armenians and in the village of Punase-Lageda — Greeks. Then an economic depression of the settlements began.

Gradually, more Russians came to settle at the originally Estonian villages. Russian became the language of communication between different peoples. Common school and work and weakening of religious and language bars promoted mixed marriages, predominantly with Russians. In most cases, the son-in-law or the daughter-in-law came from a faraway place, so that the marriage did not bring along close contacts with another people as was the case with indigenous Caucasian relatives from the neighbourhood, who were known for a particularly keen sense of relationship, owing to which all more distant Estonian relatives of mixed marriages were under a considerable influence from indigenous Caucasians.

² The Estonians in the village of Ülem-Linda had closer connections only with their German and Latvian neighbours.

³ Capitalism arose on the Georgian plains in the second half of the 19th century, as it did in Estonia.

Neighbours of different ethnicity have some influence on each other's customs. Therefore, a change in the customs of settlers can be detected depending, on the one hand, on material, ideological and social conditions and, on the other hand, on ethnic factors (mutual interaction of Estonians from different regions, neighbours from different ethnicities). This article is aimed at finding out mutual cultural influences. That is not an easy task, as the customs related to most important events in people's lives are, to a great extent, of an international character. The comparison is even more complicated due to the fact that there are no comprehensive studies about Estonian funeral customs (exequies). In Georgia, these customs are variegated — as tribal differences have been preserved there. Armenians and Greeks of these settlements are resettlers from Turkey and from territories influenced by Turkey; their customs have not been studied.

This article is based mainly on materials collected on nine expeditions to the Caucasus in 1984–1987 (EA 203, 1–273; EA 207, 181–394; EA 218, 11–63). The material for comparison was collected from Estonia in 1986–1989 (EA 212, EA 213; EA 225; EA 226), Ingria and Mordovia (EA 218; EA 220) (Mikkor 1993; Mikkor 1994; Mikkor 1994a, Mikkor 1995).

Death

In former times, nursing a hopelessly ill person was a common concern both of the family and the villagers. People went to see and comfort the dying person, whose condition was relieved by praying. Nowadays, it is thought in the settlements and also in Estonia that there is no sense in disturbing a hopelessly ill person. Only the next of kin are summoned.

In the course of time, it has been noted that dying persons are restless and that they have various wishes as to the whereabouts, food, etc. Often they wish to change the bed or to be lifted on the floor. They have asked to be washed, the door or the window to be opened.⁴ Some people gain appetite before death. One of the informants from the village of Estonia told that the dying person must be fed before death, because if a person dies hungry, he/she will start asking for food from the relatives in their dreams (Puusta). It was believed earlier in Estonia that people eating before death foreboded misery and hunger to the survivors. It was feared that disregard of a dying person's wishes might cause haunting. In the settlements, the deceased revealed their discontent through dreams; haunting was mentioned only in sayings, and this was generally feared: 'Our Mamma said that those on the sea and those behind the mountains may come back but those who are underground will not'

⁴ In Estonia, the dying person was lifted to the floor to make dying easier (Luce 1827, 101; Boecler, Kreutzwald 1854, 67; Wiedemann 1876, 309). This was done even quite recently, upon the wish of the person (EA 212, 188). In Estonia, the door and the window were opened to let the soul out. A more recent tradition was to open the window after death (EA 212, 349). Caucasian Estonians do not remember such beliefs, but Armenians and Georgians open the window for the leaving soul.

(Tšernjagina). Nowadays the dying person's wishes are fulfilled on ethical considerations.



Anette Angelstok with her grandfather at Sulevi in about 1904. 'The pipe and the walking-stick were put in my mother's father's coffin. I was 5 or 6 then. I used to go to him, and he would say, 'Child, be good now, put my hands on breast and go home, and tell your Ma to come here after a while.' (Angelstok 1986)

Before death, some people start preparing for the departure, either in dreams or awake. A woman from the village of Estonia dreamt a few days before her death that her relatives, who had died earlier, came after her and in her dream, she started bundling up her clothes (Puusta). Sometimes dying persons express a desire to go home although they are at home. In Estonia and Ingria, some concrete cases were referred to where the people dying desired to go home and packed their things (EA 212, 185; EA 220, 147–148). Already deceased relatives coming to meet a dying person is an internationally known notion (Loorits 1927; Dzhnanashvili 1893; 158; Kemppinen 1967, 26; Vdovin 1976, 246; Gracheva 1976, 51).

On the verge of death, the dying person's nose and chin sharpen and eyes become grey. Often, they turn their eyes to the wall or look up. Two cases were mentioned where the dying persons saw an apparition of a hole in the wall they were afraid of falling into.⁵ In the village of Estonia, a seriously ill boy saw that his dead father came after him and was walking in the hayloft and the boy was glad about it (Puusta). Empirical observations and religious beliefs are in a mutual relation. The described anxiety, wishes and the look of the afflicted person are interpreted as omens posthumously.⁶

⁵ Many peoples used to bore a hole in the wall to ease the escape of the soul (Zelenin 1927, 321). Karelians explained the upward glance of the dying person so that he/she was trying to see the relatives who had died earlier and were now waiting at the head of the bed (Ränk 1949, 46; Salmio 1976, 25).

⁶ About the death omens from the surroundings (birds, animals, sounds of unknown origin) for Estonians of Abkhazia, see Mikkor 1996, 167–181.

Although the patient has no hope of recovery, it is necessary to secure as fast and painless a death as possible. At the time of dying, there should be silence and the name of the person about to die must not be called, otherwise he/she would remain vacillating between life and death for hours or even days. In our days in Estonia, silence is often considered as the last respect. Beliefs that evil people die a difficult death, which have persisted in the settlements until today, were more common in the village of Estonia, while confessing one's misdeeds was considered necessary. There were also witches among indigenous Caucasian neighbours. A witch had been in great pain before death. In the end, she told his son to break open the ceiling boards from the eastern side. After that a big fly flew in and circled around the room three times, buzzing loudly, and the old woman finally died (Puusta). Breaking loose the ceiling boards and an image of a soul-insect are known both internationally and in Estonia⁷ (Eisen 1926, 255, 256; Raadla 1939, 10). At other settlements, the belief that sinful people die in pain is disappearing more rapidly than in the village of Estonia. Now different diseases are regarded to be the cause of pain. Only some sayings have preserved, such as 'You'll be in agony as you are so wicked that you cannot die', etc.

In connection with expiration and due to Armenian influences, Estonians of the Salme village cure different diseases with a dying person's hand. At the moment when a person is breathing his/her last, the sore spot is touched with the dying person's hand, saying, 'You are departing now, take my misfortune with you' (Sapozhnikova). Healing with the hand of a dead person can be found until the present day both in Estonia and at Caucasian settlements, but it is based on the idea of the evil and at the same time healing effect of the corpse, and not on the idea of the soul's departure as is the case at Salme.

Until now, cases of a death-like state are remembered in the settlements. It has occurred even that people have been buried alive. As in Estonia and elsewhere (Jung 1879, 114, 115; Haavamäe 1934, 445), when finding an old grave, it has been discovered that 'the row of buttons was arranged differently', i.e. the body has turned the other side in the grave. Sometimes cries of the apparently dead have been heard, but help came too late.

There are two reports about the time of dying from the village of Estonia, according to which a person will die at the same time of the day when he/she was born. The author knows an equivalent belief from the Livs, who thought that the time of a person's death would be two hours after the time of his/her birth (Loorits 1932, 177).

⁷ According to a Georgian folk belief, the soul was carried away by a butterfly (Dzhanashvili 1893, 159). East Slavs thought that evil spirits, waiting for the soul of a witch, would leave through a hole in the ceiling, taking along the leaving soul (Zelenin 1927, 320, 321; Shein 1890, 570).

Washing and Dressing the Body

The eyes and the mouth of the deceased are closed, as in Estonia it was considered a bad omen when they remained open. At Ülem-Linda, the mouth of a farmer had remained open, and some time later, a baby was born to his son and died soon after birth (EA 218, 57). When needed, coins are placed on the eyelids of the dead person and a roll of cloth is put under his/her chin or the chin is tied up with a piece of cloth. The purpose of closing both the eyes and mouth and the following activity is explained today from an aesthetic point of view. The washing rite is not so thorough any more in Estonia, either. In some rare cases, when the deceased had been washed before death, he/she was not washed again. An older practice of washing and dressing the person already before death could be found in Estonia, Finland and Russia even in the last century (Wiedemann 1876, 309; Salmio 1976, 27; Mashkin 1862, 80; Zelenin 1915, 663; Kotlyarevsky 1891, 210; Zelenin 1927, 320). Initially, post-mortem washing was even regarded as improper. In earlier literature, the only notes about the time of the washing the dead in Estonia were that 'as soon as the soul left the body, the dead person was washed ...' (Jannsen 1874, 302). Most of the later data both from Estonia and the settlements state the same. The washing was done promptly because stiffening of the dead body would have complicated the dressing process. At all settlements it was considered necessary, in some particular cases, to postpone the washing of the body for some hours, as the deceased was believed to perceive the surroundings for some time after death. Sometimes it was thought that a dead person could perceive the surroundings for a whole day or even during three days (EA 218, 59–60). In most cases, the delayed washing was not due to beliefs.⁸ Armenians and Georgians of the settlements wash the dead body only after it has cooled down (EA 207, 387) or on the day preceding the funeral, which is an old tradition⁹ (Mamaladze 1893, 77; Dzhanashvili 1893, 159). Consequently, Estonians living there may have been influenced by the neighbours.

Usually the dead were washed by members of the family or more distant relatives. In some cases, especially in mixed families, close relatives were not allowed to wash the deceased. The same ban could also be found sporadically in Estonia¹⁰ (Allik 1970, 58; Lang 1981, 38). According to the information obtained from Estonian settlers, their indigenous Caucasian neighbours are strictly forbidden to take part in preparations for the funeral: 'But among the dark-skinned, the relatives must not do anything, they only sit by the coffin

⁸ The Izhorians also used to wait a couple of hours before washing the dead (Päss 1939, 202; EA 218, 207). About Finland it is said that the corpse was not washed until it had stiffened (Harva 1935, 105).

⁹ At some places in Georgia, the deceased was washed immediately after death (Georgadze 1977, 6).

¹⁰ In Finland the deceased was mostly washed by members of the family (Talve 1979, 187).

day and night and lament, it's a question of honour'¹¹ (Kuldkepp). In earlier times, washing was done by older people, today the washers can also be middle-aged. A man is washed by men and a woman by women, although women may also wash a man. In order to get rid of the fear of the dead, it was necessary to touch the left foot of the dead body (Jakobson). This is a variant of an international tradition (Wiedemann 1876, 477; Zavoiko 1914, 97; Smirnov 1920, 32; Haavamäe 1934, 44; Päss 1939, 198, 199, 203, 219; Juvas, Reponen 1939, 287).

Estonians of the Caucasus wash the dead mostly on the floor, on old cloths or linen and a wax cloth. Earlier, the dead were washed on straw and hay (EA 218, 58) but this has not been practised for a long time. At the villages of Sulevi and Punase-Lageda, dead bodies are washed on benches. Usually the body is washed in the room where the person died. A case has been recorded from the village of Sulevi, where the body was washed in the yard (Toomasson), which is said to be a common tradition among Armenians¹² (EA 207, 367). In the settlements of Estonia and Punase-Lageda, the bodies are washed with warm water and soap; in recent decades, washers of other settlements have begun to use vodka and ethanol for rubbing the dead body. In Estonia, the practice of cleaning a dead body with ethanol spread in the 1930s and 1940s (EA 225, 447, 521).

Caucasian Estonians do not believe any more in a harmful effect of the items used for washing the dead body. There are some references from different settlements about casting the washing water under a tree or by the side of a fence: 'Some threw it on a tree, for its good luck, in a young tree' (Angelstok). It was considered important to avoid walking on the place where the water had been thrown but there is no knowledge of the reason of such a prohibition. The same applied to water that had been used for washing a newborn child (Mikkor 1985, 38, 39). The same requirements are known in Estonia and among other peoples. At Punase-Lageda, the washing water was put in a vessel under the bed of the dead person. This had to keep the dead body from getting spoiled. This has been also done in some places in Estonia (H IV 4, 338 (9) < Tarvastu; ERA II 138, 579/80 (70) < Hargla). Sometimes the soap that had been used for washing was put into the grave. In the village of Estonia, this is done so up to now. At other settlements, the soap is thrown away, burnt or dug into the ground; in poorer times, the soap was used up. In Estonia, the soap was formerly put into the grave or given to the washer. Votes and Russians buried the washing utensils or threw them into a river (Ariste 1974, 151; Zelenin 1915, 909; Zelenin 1927, 321; Zavoiko 1914, 91), Izhorians burned or buried the utensils (EA 220, 185). The Armenians living in the settlements bury the clothes which the person had on at the moment of death; the Georgi-

¹¹ On the Georgian plains, this requirement was not so strict. As regards the Abkhaz people, in former times, their dead were washed by relatives (Chursin 1956, 186).

¹² The Mari people have also washed their dead in the yard on straws (Hämäläinen 1930, 134).

ans throw them into a river (EA 2 07, 367). The initial objective of such activities was to send the things to the dead person, not to get rid of the things.

There is a note from the village of Estonia about the soap used for washing the dead body being utilised for a precautionary magic practice at the funeral: 'When the deceased is carried out of the house, the soap is put on the floor and when people walk over it, all quarrels and bad things leave the house' (Ryabich).¹³ In Estonia, the soap was also used for different precautionary purposes, e.g. the shirts of a quarrelling man had to be washed with it, so that he would not start fighting (H II 57, 536 (31) < Järva-Jaani). Corresponding traditions are known internationally.

In some rare cases, the soap and the towels used for drying the dead were given away to poorer neighbours. Distribution of things left behind by the dead among poor people can often be found in the settlements and, as earlier in Estonia, some believe that in the other world, these things will be at the disposal of the dead. Indigenous Caucasian, and East Slavic, relatives and neighbours gave corresponding instructions to Estonian settlers.

The washers who did not belong to the family got paid for the work. There were great differences in the pay depending on the family and village. At Sulevi, this tradition was called 'a custom of the Oriental peoples'. At Salme, the clothes and other belongings of the dead had to be given to the washer. In Estonia, quite recently, socks and mittens were given to the washer (Raadla 1939, 18; EA 212, 189) but there is only one report about this tradition being followed at Salme. Only rarely has this work been paid for in cash. Nowadays, the washer is given purchased materials for making dresses or other pieces of clothing as nobody wants to get second-hand things. In the village of Estonia and at Leselidze, under the influence of Russians and indigenous Caucasians, a soap and a towel are given to the washer and it is stated that in former times there was no pay for the work. For East Slavs, handkerchiefs, head-cloths and towels have been the usual presents at christenings and weddings (Kotlyarevski 1981, 214); these are of the same importance as mittens, socks and belts in Estonia (Tedre 1973, 25, 28, 32, 83, 84).¹⁴

¹³ South Slavs had an analogous procedure of preventive magic. They put an axe on the threshold so that the mourners stepped over it while taking the dead body out of the house (Kotlyarevski 1891, 224).

¹⁴ At some places in Georgia, caretakers were given some wool and knitted socks (Georgadze 1977, 10).



Anette Angelstok's confirmation dress is girded with a black sash because of her mother's death. About 1919 at Sulevi. 'Mother was dressed in a light blue jacket and grey skirt. Mother never liked that silk jacket. I even thought that she would appear in my dreams with this silk jacket.' (Angelstok 1986).

The dead body is dressed by the washers. The clothes must be correct and in conformity with the wishes of the deceased person, who may otherwise appear in dreams. Usually, older women have their burial clothes ready in time before death. Men do not pay attention to it but sometimes wives take timely care of grave clothes for their husbands. In general, the dead are dressed in their best clothes, less often the clothes are sewn or bought after death. In former times, people were buried in their wedding or confirmation clothes. Earlier, some rules were followed while sewing grave clothes. Nowadays these rules are remembered by only a few people. Three notes are known from the village of Estonia which forbid to sew grave clothes with a sewing machine. This was explained only once, by saying: 'A sewing machine was made by the devil' (Ryabich). At Punase-Lageda and Leselidze, the same ban was remembered in connection with sewing a pillow case for a grave. Although this is an international ban (Smirnov 1920, 29; Loorits 1932, 183; Haavamäe 1934, 440; Päss 1939, 212; Kremleva 1980, 23; Maslova 1984, 86), this has rarely been noted in Estonia (RKM II 82, 581 (53) < Torma, Estonia) but it must have been known more widely here. There are four reports from different settlements about a ban on making a knot in the thread. In two cases, it was explained as follows: 'Well, it seems as if he/she is tied in his/her doings and cannot get on' (Truuman), 'Does the knot hold him/her back or ...' (Mustkivi). Thus a knot will bring only trouble to the dead. Once again, this is an internationally known conception and custom (Loorits 1932, 183; Smirnov 1920, 29; Kremleva 1980, 23; Maliya 1982, 104). For example, the Komi and Izhorians thought that knots would be an obstacle while passing away to the other world (Päss 1939, 211; EA 218, 124; Teryukov 1979, 82) but Votes were of the opinion that knots would trouble the dead body (Haavamäe 1934, 440). Karelians believed that knots would burn the deceased on crossing the river

of fire¹⁵ (Juvas, Reponen 1939, 285). Among the Georgians living in the settlements, it is forbidden even today to make knots while sewing grave clothes, and in the coffin, all buttons must be unbuttoned and shoe-laces must be untied. Earlier, the Estonians living in the settlements were not allowed to hem grave-clothes (two notes from Sulevi and one from Salme), which is also a seemingly rare custom in Estonia (ERA II 294, 616/22 (43) < Kihelkonna). Among other peoples, this requirement sometimes concerns grave clothes and mourning clothes while sometimes it only has to do with the winding or face sheet (Maslova 1984, 86; Maliya 1982, 104; Smirnov 1920, 29; Volkova-Dzhavahishvili 1982, 140; Harva 1935, 106). In the settlements, Georgians are still forbidden to hem mourning clothes.

A piece of cloth left over from sewing was sometimes put into the coffin: 'Let him sew there the trousers himself' (Jakobson); it was considered important to guarantee the prosperity of the dead. By the present time, the Estonians of the settlements have forgotten these requirements while practical considerations and prestige have gained importance.

Formerly, grave clothes were made of calico and were, in most cases, grey. In the 1920s and 1930s, white grave clothes for women could be found at Alam-Linda, Ülem-Linda and Leselidze (EA 218, 59). Yet in the 1910s, white grave clothes were predominant in Estonia in the county of Viljandi (Reiman 1915, 144). Today, both in the settlements and in Estonia, older people are buried in darker clothes and younger ones in lighter clothes. Black is not used for grave clothes,¹⁶ and it is even avoided. Yet black is characteristic for indigenous Caucasians. In the 1950s and 1960s, under the influence of settlers from the mountain regions, black became the common mourning colour in Georgia¹⁷ (Volkova 1978; 33, 34; Volkova-Dzhavahishvili 1982, 156) but elsewhere it is said not to be as compulsory as for the mountain tribes. Under the influence of the latter, black spread also to Armenians of the settlements under consideration (EA 207, 369).

Stockings are put on women and socks on men. In some families, the deceased was left without shoes, which is still a ruling custom for the Estonians of Punase-Lageda. At other settlements, slippers were put into the coffin or on the dead until the 1950s. In recent decades, these were mainly replaced by

¹⁵ Initially, it was considered important to undo all knots of the dying person's clothes before death, so that the soul could leave freely (Frazer 1974, 320; Karely 1983, 147).

¹⁶ The black colour is a recent German loan (Loorits 1949, 74), which spread through urban culture first to mourning clothes, later to grave-clothes. In Germany, the main mourning colour was black, but white, red and blue were used too (Sartori 1910, 156). In Estonia, the colour of grave-clothes and mourning clothes has not been studied in detail. Black is often regarded as more common, but in northern Tartumaa, as late as in the 1980s, some old women made light-coloured grave-dresses for themselves (EA 225, 396; EA 213, 332).

¹⁷ Earlier, white was also the colour of mourning in western Georgia (Volkova, Dzhavahishvili 1982, 140; Maliya 1982, 102, 103).

shoes, which were considered to be more respectable. Hitherto slippers are preferred for women in the village of Estonia. In rare cases, high-heeled shoes are put on women, which are not recommendable at all. A deceased woman appeared to her husband in his dream and spoke: 'My feet are so sore, I cannot walk in these shoes on a rough road, my feet are aching. In a nearby family, an old woman is going to die. Put my shoes on her, then I will be able to get them' (Puusta). Thus the deceased had to walk a lot in the other world, which is why she worried about her shoes.¹⁸ A similar dream was reported in Ingria (EA 218, 209). Indigenous Caucasians and East Slavs of the settlements put shoes on the dead. An Estonian in Sukhumi, Abkhazia, who came from Punase-Lageda buried her son without footwear as this was customary in her native place. Her son started to ask in her dreams, 'Mama, why didn't you put shoes on me?' (Rootsi). Mother buried the shoes at the spot of the grave, hoping that her son would get them. The woman was married to a Georgian. It was a common tradition among Estonian settlers to send things to the deceased by burying them. It is known that for example Mordvins, Abkhazians and Izhorians have sent food, presents or some things left behind to their dead relatives by burying them in another grave or by putting them in the coffin of the next person to die (Harva 1942, 26, 31; Chursin 1956, 194; EA 218, 198) and this has been noted also among Estonian Swedes living by the sea (Russwurm 1861, 124).

As a headgear, a shawl is put on old women's head; for men, often a cap is put into the coffin. In the village of Estonia, they forgot to put a cap into the coffin of a young man. The son began to demand his cap from his mother in her dreams, saying that he was cold. In the village, the Russian daughter-in-law was told to buy a cap and give it to the first person she met (Lindenbaum). Again, this is an international belief which has been preserved longer among Orthodox peoples.

The Corpse at Home

Before the funeral, the deceased was kept in an outhouse. In Estonia it was believed that the dead person had to be taken out of the house as soon as possible to avoid another death in the family¹⁹ (Allik 1970, 52). Mostly, the dead were kept in the barn as was done also in Estonia; at Salme and Sulevi, they were also kept in the cellar due to the warm and damp climate. Nowadays, the dead person is generally kept in the living room, in some cases also on the veranda. Cases of keeping the deceased in an outhouse are rare at Salme and Sulevi. First of all, it was in the village of Estonia that they started to keep the

¹⁸ This was also stated by the Finnish researcher U. Harva (Harva 1948, 489), whose point of view was called erroneous by J. Suurhasko. In the latter's opinion they strove for a form as archaic as possible (Suurhasko 1985, 67, 68, 129). Obviously both points of view are correct.

¹⁹ In Georgia, the dead body was taken out of the house as soon as possible, to avoid desecration of the house (Mashurko 1894, 343); earlier this was done already when the person was dying (Georgadze 1977, 6; Volkova, Dzhavahishvili 1982, 141).

dead in the dwelling house, where the body was laid in state in the largest room, i.e. 'the hall', to make it more convenient for the village folk to visit the dead. Other peoples of the settlements kept their dead mostly in dwelling rooms until the funeral. Nowadays, the dead in Estonia are kept in dwelling rooms, on the veranda or in an outhouse. Sometimes Georgians put up a large plastic or tarpaulin tent in the yard,²⁰ where the body is taken on the funeral day or earlier (KV 362, 237, 238). In the tent, there are long tables for the funeral feast. Some Estonian mixed families follow the example of Georgians.

The dead body is lying on a firm bed, on benches, chairs or on boards placed on the bed, and covered with a sheet. For Estonians this replaces the bier, which is still used by Armenians at Salme (EA 207, 373). Since the 1950s, Estonians of the village of Estonia, being influenced by neighbours, sometimes use special ice boxes or ice cases. There is a hole at the bottom of a rectangular wooden case. Ice is put on the bottom of the case and on the corpse. The case is tilted so that when the ice melts, the water flows out of the case through the hole.²¹ The cases are a common property of the village or several villages. People pay for the use of the cases.

Some reports are known only from the villages of Estonia and Punase-Lageda about the direction in which the dead body is lying. In former times, the feet of the body had to be directed to the east or towards the door, the coffin had to be directed along the house.

The body's hands and feet are tied to keep the limbs better together. Before the funeral, the limbs are untied, otherwise the dead person may appear in dreams. The same requirement is also known to other peoples (Manninen 1924, 12; Suurhasko 1985, 69; Päss 1939, 206). In the village of Estonia, they forgot to untie the feet of a spinster and she complained in a dream to her sister that all other deceased people were having a good time and dancing, only she had to stand by the wall as her feet were tied (Kuutman). Karelians and the Mansi dug the grave open when they had forgotten to untie the limbs (Kemppinen 1967, 33; Rombandeyeva 1980, 233). In Estonia, on the other hand, in former times the deceased were buried with tied limbs to avoid haunting (Viluoja 1971, 18, 19). Caucasian Estonians put the ties into the coffin.

After the body is washed and dressed, rearrangements are made in the whole household. In some families, mirrors are covered, less often, other reflecting surfaces are covered as well, while the religious idea of the custom has been forgotten both in the settlements and in Estonia (Viluoja 1971, 45). In most cases, people even do not know that this was done so to avoid seeing the re-

²⁰ In Mingrelia, in the past, a large wattled building was erected in the yard for the dead. This building housed about a hundred mourners (Volkova, Dzhavahishvili 1982, 151). By way of comparison, it is interesting to point out that for example Livonians erected a tent made of fabric just under the windows of the house. The dead body was taken into that tent on the eve of the funeral (Loorits 1932, 188).

²¹ We can see some analogy when comparing the box to a Caucasian cradle, which has a hole at the bottom for the excrements of the child.

flection of the dead or of the person himself. Covering of mirrors is a sign of mourning. In Estonia it was believed that when a person saw the reflection, he/she might die or his/her face might turn yellow or pale²² (Loorits 1932 a, 37; Raadla 1939, 15). Originally, mirrors were covered already during dying because it was believed that the reflection of a living person may hold his/her soul that may be carried along by the soul of the deceased (Frazer 1974, 253, 254). In some families at Salme and Sulevi, mirrors are not covered, in Le-selidze the custom was stated to be new and taken over from neighbours. In the settlements, the custom of covering the mirrors is disappearing in some places, while in other places it is reviving. In Estonia, this custom can be met in northern Tartumaa up to these days, but in many places, it is no longer remembered (EA 213, 316, 337, 338; EA 225, 527, 450). Generally, this international tradition disappeared earlier among Lutheran peoples.²³

In the village of Estonia, the clock is stopped as a sign of mourning, which is a newer and a more rare tradition in Estonia (Allik 1970, 116; Tedre 1985, 77).²⁴

Some of the furniture is taken out of the room where the body is kept, thereby Estonians of the village of Estonia are more radical. The village folk assists the family of the deceased at chores and in preparing for the funeral. Although people are more helpful in the settlements than in Estonia, in some families only the relatives take care of the preparations. More assistance is rendered to mixed families.

Caucasian Estonians do not remember any special bans on work; however, no big works are undertaken at that time because of the lack of time. When there is mourning in the village, Russian neighbours must not butcher a pig, do whitewashing or preserve anything or otherwise 'the smell of the dead will stick'. It is not recommendable to plant or sow, either, because the plants would not grow. But there was also an opposite belief that it was useful to sow and plant namely on the day of funeral.²⁵ Indigenous Caucasians of the settlements know some bans on work concerning the house of mourning: Armenians must not wash the floor or do the laundry (EA 207, 372, 389); Georgians were not allowed to wash themselves in the house of mourning, this could be done only at a neighbour's house across a river.²⁶ Indigenous Caucasians were not allowed to make fire in the hearth or to cook in the house where there was a corpse. All these bans were formerly known in Estonia (Wiedemann 1876, 310; Waronen 1898, 68; Reiman 1915, 146; Raadla 1939, 36, 37;

²² In the village of Sulevi, it was believed that if an expectant mother looked at a dead body, her baby would be born with a pale, yellowish or ghastly face (Mikkor 1985, 17, 18).

²³ In Ingria, Lutheran Finns had no tradition of covering the mirrors (EA 220, 150) and at Latvians, it was considered to be a Russian influence (Ustinova 1980, 141).

²⁴ Initially, the clock was stopped before death (Salmio 1976, 28; E 83430 (7) < Pärnu).

²⁵ In Latvia, all plants and seeds were taken out of the house so that the dead could not deaden them (Sirijos-Giraite 1971, 6).

²⁶ It was believed that the soul of the dead cannot cross a river.

Eisen 1920, 41). For indigenous Caucasians, the bans applied even after the funeral. During a year after death, the family was not allowed to stew a chicken, as it was believed that it would scratch the ground in the eyes of the deceased (EA 207, 372).²⁷



Men chopping meat for the funeral feast, Sulevi village, 1950. It was men's job to procure the coffin and meat.

During the preparations, a coffin was procured. A few decades ago coffins were made in the village, now they are bought from town. Earlier some men used to make the coffin and the cross for themselves during their lifetime, which is said to be 'a very old tradition'. More often, boards for the coffin were provided.

From the village of Estonia, the following ban is known in connection with coffin-making: 'A coffin was being made to my neighbour. I said: "God speed you!" The coffin-maker said that when a coffin is being made, one should never say "God speed you!"' (Kuutman). The same ban was known to East Slavs: it was forbidden to say 'God help you!' to a coffin-maker or a gravedigger (Zelenin 1914, 157), as it might cause another death in the family.

A soft mattress of wood shavings and a cloth was put into the coffin, the pillow was stuffed with shavings, too. Earlier it was not allowed to use a feather pillow, because '... a feather is warm' (Angelstok).²⁸

An informant from the village of Estonia remembered that formerly, the cloth for the coffin and winding sheet had to be torn, not cut with scissors: 'it is not good to cut for the dead' (Ryabich). There is a report from Estonia about a similar ban for making grave-clothes (H II 27, 229 (8) < Palamuse). This tradition is internationally known (Maslova 1984, 86; Smirnov 1920, 29; Shein 1890, 540; Strogalshchikova 1986, 72; Maliya 1982, 86; Mikkor 1993, 33).

²⁷ For Armenians, field work and digging were forbidden when the dead body was at home (Narody 1962, 532).

²⁸ Initially, the feather pillow was removed already while the person was dying. It was thought that the soul may get entangled in feathers (Paulaharju 1924, 70; Salmio 1976, 29; Zelenin 1927, 320). A more recent tradition was to avoid using a feather pillow for the dead (Sartori 1910, 126; Konkka 1985, 56). Until the present time, the feather pillow is removed in Mordovia (Mikkor 1993, 33).

The remainders of coffin-making were burnt or put into the coffin. The corresponding religious explanations originate from the village of Sulevi: if the scraps were preserved, the relatives would miss the dead for a very long time (EA 203, 184), the deceased may appear in dreams (EA 203, 214), another death may occur soon in the same family (EA 203, 166). Once it happened that the coffin had been made too long, and it was cut shorter. The remaining pieces were put into the coffin, as 'it was not seemly to have them lying about somewhere' (EA 203, 201). In Estonia, more deaths were predicted when the coffin was oversized. Estonian settlers got a remedy from Armenians against excessive yearning for the dead: some earth was taken from the bottom of the grave and put on the shoulder (EA 203, 184). Earlier this tradition was known also to East Slavs and Karelians (Zelenin 1914, 61; Karely 1983, 149; Zelenin 1927, 327).

Fire, light and wake offered protection against evil spirits lurking around the corpse. Settlers have preserved these traditions very differently, depending on the family. Their explanations correspond to contemporary understandings: this tradition is followed to express respect for the deceased. Georgians and Armenians, on the other hand, keep the room of the dead lighted before the funeral and also three or forty days after the death, believing that the soul that is wandering in the neighbourhood might return (EA 207, 370, 389). Night wakes, which were not held in some Estonian families or which were, for some time, a tradition not followed, are beginning to revive due to influence from neighbours. However, some communications state that night wakes were formerly obligatory, but no longer now. Others state that it is a tradition taken over from neighbours. In most cases, Estonians will sit by the body only up to the nightfall; night wakes are more characteristic of mixed families. Generally, Lutheran peoples departed from this tradition earlier while Orthodox peoples have sporadically preserved it to these days.²⁹ Daytime wake is a more recent phenomenon, spreading on the example of the neighbours, and it is also an old international tradition (Sartori 1910, 139). Both in Estonia and also in the settlements, wake was motivated by the fear that rodents and cats might get at the corpse. Two respondents joked at Punase-Lageda, saying, 'Well I don't know why they used to keep watch. I have not dared to ask anybody. Anyway, it's not because the body will try to run off' (Mustkivi); 'The corpse, they say, must not be left alone. I wonder why. Perhaps because it would stand up and slip away' (Tobias). Such a concept of the 'living corpse' was prevalent in ancient and medieval times, which originally gave rise to the custom of wake (Rimpiläinen 1971, 34). Nowadays it is thought that the deceased may feel lonely. A woman from the village of Estonia told a story re-

²⁹ After reformation, with the help of ecclesiastical laws, pressure was exerted on night wake in Finland and by the beginning of this century, this tradition was limited only to the last night or the eve of the funeral (Rimpiläinen 1971, 241; Ollila 1932, 90; Vuorela 1977, 624; Talve 1979, 188). In Estonia, e.g. in northern Tartumaa, the night wake disappeared in the 1930s and 1940s; in other places it had been forgotten even before that (EA 213, 280; EA 225, 488). Also in Ingria, Lutheran Finns did not remember this tradition (EA 220, 149).

vealing an analogy to an international belief — which has also spread in Estonia — that the devil may creep into the body (Raadla 1939, 29): ‘When my brother-in-law died, his sister was there. He had been fond of drinking. The sister told that something like a fire came, run up the dead body to its head, into the mouth and disappeared. She did not know what to think of it and told the story to me. Russians say that an evil spirit will come and no matter whether you be on the lookout for an evil or a good spirit to appear, you will not see it’ (Puusta). It appears from this note that Estonians considered the wake pointless. The wake was held by relatives, friends and neighbours. In the daytime, relatives sit beside the body. The old custom of eating during wakes has almost vanished; today this can be come across only in the village of Estonia. At the beginning of the century, peas were eaten during wakes at Sulevi, where, when speaking about the health of a terminally ill person, it was said that ‘soon we’ll have to start eating peas’ (Vuurmann). Eating peas during the wake was known also in Estonia and in Finland, where this saying became a symbol of funerals (Varjola 1971, 84). At the beginning of the century, sacred songs were sung during the wake. At the present time, the wakers talk to each other, sometimes they play cards.³⁰ Sometimes the wakers go to bed in an adjacent room but sometimes they sleep also in the same room with the body. This is a violation of a demand in folk belief which initially forbade sleeping anywhere in the house while the deceased was still at home; later it was not allowed to sleep in the same room with the body, so that the soul of the deceased could not take along the soul of the sleeper (Raadla 1939, 29; Frazer 1974, 254).

Following the example of other peoples, Caucasian Estonians have started to revive the tradition of seeing the dead on the days before the funeral. Meanwhile this tradition was followed only by relatives and closer acquaintances, just as in Estonia. There was a somewhat ironic attitude towards the corresponding Caucasian custom: ‘They kept coming and coming ... When a Mingrelian dies, all the people of the village hurry to the dead even when they are barefoot’ (Truuman). Estonians went to see the deceased more often in the village of Estonia and in some families of the village of Salme. Like indigenous Caucasians, they kept the door of the house and the gate open all the time when the body was at home (EA 207, 370, 388).

When visiting the dead, many Estonians take flowers to the house of mourning. In Estonia, formerly small coins were put on the chest of the body,³¹ which was a reward for the washers and also meant to cover the costs of the funeral (Reiman 1915, 147; Raadla 1939, 30). The custom was preserved longer in eastern Estonia, where the money was eventually given only to the poor (Lang 1981, 38). Caucasian Estonians do not remember this custom. However, money is given by the Russian (RKM II 249, 777; RKM II 318, 40), Armenian and Georgian settlers. Estonians consider this to be a custom of ‘the dark-skinned’, i.e. the indigenous Caucasians. Money-offering spread on

³⁰ About playing cards during the wake, see Sartori 1910, 139.

³¹ Also in Latvia (Hupel 1777, 190).

the Georgian plains at the end of the previous century, replacing the practice of giving food (Mamaladze 1893, 82; Sagaradze 1899, 17), just as in Estonia. At the beginning of the new century, the custom declined, but in the 1950s and 1960s, it revived under the influence of resettlers from the mountains. Armenians of the settlements put money on the pillow or a plate beside the body,³² among Georgians the money is collected by a man sitting at the table and writing down all the sums received because if the same accident happens to the family of the donator, the same sum must be taken to that family. This was the way they acted also in the previous century (Mamaladze 1893, 82; Sagaradze 1899, 17). Armenian men give money, women give towels that will be given later to the attendants of the dead (EA 207, 366). Greek women of the village of Punase-Lageda brought handkerchiefs and towels. The donated money can be spent only for the dead person (EA 207, 366). As there are many visitors and everybody brings money, sometimes Georgians are said to have bought a car, a house or some other expensive things, to the great surprise of others (KV 362, 238). In the village of Estonia, Georgians collect money also on the occasion of the death of their Estonian friend or colleague, this also happens in mixed families. Estonians have collected money only when some lonely poor person dies, as lack of money for funeral expenses was considered to be a shame.

When seeing the corpse, Georgians weep loudly, which is considered to be hypocritical by Estonians: 'In former times, the dark-skinned folk used to hire keeners, who walked about with streaky faces. They made awful sounds, as if aching badly. But Estonians cry from their hearts' (Jakobson). 'When Georgians go to funerals by car, they keep talking on the way as if being merry, but when they are coming closer to the house, they start yelling. The more they yell, the more respectable are the funerals.' (Kuldkepp). Estonians also look down on Svans and Mingrelians because of their tradition of scratching their own faces and tearing their hair. These are the mourning customs known to many peoples since the ancient times, which could also be found among Orthodox Finno-Ugrians. In the last century, the 'wildness' and 'formality' of the mourning traditions of mountain peoples were criticised also by Georgian writers (Mamaladze 1893, 81, 82; Sagaradze 1899, 18; Mashurko 1894, 342). Women born in mixed families of Estonians try to follow the tradition of keening. Even behind the fence, they still keep talking about how glad the household would be about the large sums of money but when arriving by the corpse, tears appear in their eyes as if by magic, and they begin to lament in Russian: 'Just a short time ago you were so fair and healthy! Why did you forsake us, etc.' (in 1985 in the village of Estonia). When an Estonian dies, his/her Georgian neighbours do not keen loudly, but keep repeating in Russian: 'Oh, good soul! Why did you die ...' etc.

When women went to see the dead, they inspected the condition and the looks of the corpse. If the deceased was not stiffened, this predicted another death in the near future. In the village of Punase-Lageda it was said that another

³² In Finland, the money was collected at funerals onto a plate (Ollila 1932, 92).

person would die before 40 days would pass and this would be followed by a third death. The belief is said to be characteristic to Russians but three successive deaths were anticipated in Estonia, too. According to a communication from the village of Estonia, good looks of the deceased predicted a new mourning in the village, as used to be the case in Estonia (Allik 1970, 72). Another woman from the same village told that, on the contrary, this would predict good life for the deceased in the other world. In the village of Estonia, it was believed that the dead body of a sinful person would taint easily. There was a pious man who used to threaten people with this but who, after death, began to fester and swell so badly that the wakers ran away from the corpse in horror. In Estonia, there was a belief that it was the devil that had crept into the tainted corpse, and most probably the devil preferred sinful people. Today, beliefs connected with the condition of the corpse are disappearing. This is due to the modern treatment of the corpse.

The subtropical climate in the settlements calls for greater attention to the preservation of the dead than in Estonia, and appropriate measures have been improved over time. Formerly, in hot weather the funeral was arranged as soon as possible. In the settlements, some substances known from the settlers' native land, such as iron, earth, water, sand and salt, were used.³³ In addition, lime and nettles were used as well. The methods and means vary largely depending on the settlement and the family (see Mikkor 1988, 48–50). Iron was put under the bed of the dead body, but also beside and on the stomach of the dead body. Earth, water and lime were placed in a vessel under the bed. Salt and sand were put onto the stomach. The effect of all means was explained physically. Earlier, many peoples believed that iron, earth, salt and water protected from evil, and therefore these substances were used at births and weddings as well.

Estonians learned from their neighbours how to use nettles. Nettles were put on the corpse under the clothes and on the face. Estonians of the village of Leselidze took the following practice from Russian holiday-makers: a wire is wound around the little finger of the body, the other end of the wire is inserted into a bucket of earth under the bed. Formerly, this was known also in Estonia, e.g. northern Tartumaa and elsewhere (EA 212, 277, 278, 315; RKM II 22, 54 (20) < R apina). Today, the settlers use spirits, ice and formalin, which is injected into the dead body.

The length of the time of keeping the deceased at home depends on traditions, preparations for the funeral and the season. Generally, the settlers buried their dead on the third or fourth day after death. There are data from Salme and Sulevi indicating that at least up to the 1920s, the dead were sometimes buried on the day following the death, and in one case, the funeral took place even on the day of death. This was partly due to the warmer climate and the lack the watchful eye of the church. A fast funeral on the day of death or the

³³ The author knows just one case, when salt was placed on a plate under the coffin (RKM II 3, 77 (7) < K arla). Salt was used by the Vod and Izhorians (Haavam e 1934, 438; EA 218, 176).

following day could be come across also in Estonia as late as in the previous century (Rosenplänter 1823, 36; Winkler 1909, 17; Luce 1827, 101–102).

Beginning from the 1940s and 1950s, they started to keep the deceased at home for a longer time, owing to the preparations for more generous funerals, expectations of far-away relatives to arrive and also the improvement of methods for preserving the corpse. Nowadays, the dead is at home for three or four days, in rare cases up to six days. Delays of funerals are considered to be a Caucasian custom. Following the old customs of mountain peoples, the Georgians of the settlements kept their dead at home from ten days to two weeks.³⁴ Nowadays, under the pressure of the government, Georgians do not keep their dead at home for such a long period.

Placing the Body in the Coffin

Earlier, the dead body was put into the coffin as soon as possible, on the eve of the funeral at the latest. At the present time, more often the dead are placed into the coffin on the morning of the funeral, as is done by other peoples. In the past century in Estonia the dead body was put into the coffin shortly before going to the graveyard³⁵ (Reiman 1915, 147). At the beginning of the present century, the morning of the funeral or the night before, or still later the day after the death were considered to be the proper time (Reiman 1915, 147; Lang 1981, 41, 42). In the settlements, the act has again been put off until a later time.

Up to the 1930s, the dead body was placed into the coffin in a clerical ceremony, conducted by churchwardens.³⁶ Later, this task was taken up by other eloquent village people. By today, clerical ceremonies have predominantly disappeared. First the blessing of the coffin discontinued, singing of ecclesiastical songs was preserved longer. In these days, the dead is lifted into the coffin without any special ceremonies. At Punase-Lageda, a secular ceremony of placing the dead into the coffin developed, where speeches were delivered and food offered.

The dead is supplied with some objects. The list of things which are put into the coffin has changed both in Estonia and in the settlements. Instead of household utensils and other necessities, the favourite objects of the deceased are put into the coffin, taking into consideration the likes and wishes of the dead. It has been stated about Estonia that the tradition of putting things into the coffin disappeared here by the beginning of the present century (Moora

³⁴ At some places in Georgia, the dead were buried on the day of death or next day. On the Georgian plains it was common to bury on the 3rd or 4th day.

³⁵ In Mordovia, the deceased were taken on biers halfway to the graveyard and only there they were put into the coffin (Harva 1942, 29).

³⁶ According to L. Võime, the settlers had accepted secular traditions already by 1924 (Võime 1980, 142). According to the author's data, former churchwardens acted at least up to the 1930s (AM. F. 309, N.1.S. 22, L.4p.).

1956, 33, 34) or even by the present time (Lang 1981, 44, 45). Actually, at places the tradition has preserved in these days too. In the settlements, tobacco, pipes, cigarettes and strong drinks were put into the coffin for men and handicraft necessities for women. Washing materials, in former times a soap and a sauna whisk, were provided both for men and women (EA 203, 14). In the village of Estonia a handkerchief, a soap and a comb are the most common things put into the coffin. It was as late as in 1982 that in the village of Sulevi, on the advice of an elderly Estonian, some coins were put into the pocket of the dead so that he could purchase a place in the heaven³⁷ (EA 203, 215). Middle-aged Estonians regarded this custom with irony and contempt. Even in heaven one cannot get anything without money, they said. For Georgians of the settlements, money was the main thing to be put into the coffin. The Georgians supply the dead with strong drinks, cigarettes, sweets and great sums of banknotes so that the dead could buy what he would need in the other world. On the other hand, the Armenians were not allowed to put money into the coffin 'lest the dead will snatch all your money'³⁸ (EA 207, 366). Instead, Armenians provide all the best clothes of the dead, and a new towel (EA 207, 368). Once even a gun was put into the coffin. Both Russians and Greeks put towels, handkerchiefs and a soap into the coffin. Moldovans and Greeks throw silver coins into the grave and Russians throw copper coins to purchase a place for the dead or to pay the tax for passing through the Golden Gates.³⁹ At Punase-Lageda, Russians have insisted that Estonians should throw money into the grave.

There is a report from the village of Estonia about an ancient requirement to put hairs into the coffin (Wiedemann 1876, 478; Eisen 1926, 115). It was not allowed to burn the beard after shaving the dead. It was put into the coffin. It is a wide-spread tradition to put dentures, spectacles, crutches, sticks and the like into the grave.

It was more characteristic for women to express their wishes. They want to take along their dresses, photos. A self-murderer from the village of Sulevi left behind a letter: 'Put the violin and the bow into my coffin, they will be my husband and child' (EA 203, 80). Men have often asked for a bottle of vodka. In earlier times, hymnals were put into the coffin. From a comparison of different settlements, it appears that in the village of Sulevi, the wishes of the dead were taken into consideration more often. Due to this, there was a great variety of grave objects. In the village of Estonia, this tradition is more cus-

³⁷ Money has been put into the coffin also in Estonia in the 1980s (EA 213, 338, 340).

³⁸ In Võrumaa, Estonia, luck in financial matters was expected for the mourners if they put money in the coffin (Kirk). Both beliefs are internationally known and earlier it was forbidden in some places of Estonia — while being specifically recommended at others — to put wool and linen in the coffin for this purpose.

³⁹ According to P. Varjola, the casting of money into the grave is an eastern tradition and the putting of money in the coffin is a western tradition (Varjola 1980, 121). Actually, the so-called eastern peoples have done both (Zelenin 1927, 323; Balov 1898, 88; Shein 1890, 530, 541; Dzhanashvili 1893: 159; Bogoslavski 1924, 75).

tomary and the main items are a handkerchief, a towel, a soap and a comb. Although these things had been put into the coffin both in Estonia and in Finland (Hupel 1777, 155; Talve 1979, 188), in the case of the settlers, the influence of other peoples cannot be ruled out. Following the example of their neighbours, Estonians of the village of Estonia give the soap and towel to the corpse-washer. At Punase-Lageda, Russians and Greeks gave a handkerchief to an Estonian dead, but Estonians are said to have taken it away indignantly. For Orthodox East Slavs, towels and handkerchiefs were the common things to be put into the coffin, and initially they were considered to be a substitute for money (Kotlyarevsky 1891, 215). Earlier, all objects indicated above were internationally known (Varjola 1980).

The Funeral

Last Respects

Formerly, funerals were undertaken at any time. Nowadays, public holidays and the so-called 'bad' days are not considered proper. Monday is the worst day, Friday and Wednesday are a little better. All these days are internationally known as inauspicious.⁴⁰ Older Estonians regarded the forbidden days with doubt, considering them as an influence of the neighbours: 'Nowadays Estonians are aping dark-skinned folks and would not bury, either' (Jakobson), 'Why should Monday be rough, it's just sots for whom it may be a rough day.' (Vuurman)

Earlier, up to 30 closer relatives and neighbours were asked to the funeral, that was as many people as the family could feed. When the settlements became multinational, only Estonians were asked to the funeral of an Estonian. Neighbours, friends and relatives of other peoples came uninvited, as was their custom.⁴¹ Sometimes, before death, older Estonians express the wish that only Estonians should be asked to come to the funeral. '... However, Russians come without invitation. But nobody was thrown out; Russians would also seat themselves at the table' (Reisman). At the present time in mixed families of Estonians and also if a young person has died, people go to the funeral without invitation. Georgians may have 500–1000 people attending the funeral.⁴² Under the influence of neighbours, the number of people attending funerals has increased, reaching 200 at Sulevi and 400 in the village of Esto-

⁴⁰ For Georgians, Monday was the worst day and Wednesday was second-worst (Mashurko 1894, 274); for Finns, the worst days were Wednesday and Friday (Fieandt 1932, 29). On these days, it was not allowed to bury the dead or to start a new work. Izhorians were also forbidden to have funerals on Mondays and Wednesdays (EA 218, 178).

⁴¹ On the Georgian plains, written invitations to funerals were sent (Mamaladze 1893, 75).

⁴² At the turn of the century, about two hundred mourners participated in funerals of Svans and Mingrelians, but at some places in Georgia, only some twenty or thirty people took part in the funeral (Volkova, Dzhavahishvili 1982, 144, 147, 149).

nia. There are more people at funerals of younger people who have more acquaintances and relatives.

As late as in the last century, in Estonia all the village folk came to pay the last tribute, bringing along some food. This tradition continued longer, when older and more respectable people died. Over time, the number of people attending the funerals decreased to such a degree that the family of the dead could feed all of them.⁴³

Estonians take flowers to the funerals, other peoples take money and towels as it was when they came to see the dead.

In former times, food was offered to the people gathered in the house of mourning before taking the dead out of the house. At the villages of Salme, Sulevi and Punase-Lageda, they were treated to warm dishes, at the villages of Estonia and Alam-Linda, on the other hand, only cold dishes were served at the morning. In the 1930s, warm dishes being served before the funerals were predominantly replaced by cold dishes (Moora 1976, 87; Lang 1981, 50–51), but on the island of Saaremaa, warm dishes are still being served. Now in the settlements, the Estonians offer warm dishes less frequently: this can be come across only at the villages of Sulevi and Leselidze, where that tradition is explained with the graveyard being far away (EA 203, 77, 78, 270). Today Estonians often consider this tradition as alien. Indigenous Caucasians preserved this old custom until recently (Sagaradze 1899, 17). They thought that in this way the dead would refresh themselves before departure (Chursin 1905, 69). In connection with the anti-alcohol campaign in the 1980s, the Georgian authorities exerted pressure on the custom (Volkova, Dzhavahishvili 1982, 155.) ‘And now people in this country are told to feed guests after the funeral. It’s because they get drunk and take their cars and drive like mad, and to hell with the corpse. We used to invite the music choir everywhere, to Georgia and Svanetia, and sometimes it happened that the members of our choir had to carry the corpse, all the others were drunk’ (Kovalenko). We know from history different bans and limitations related to funerals. From the antiquity to the Middle Ages certain demands were put to the number of people attending the funeral, the amount of food and drinks and the duration of the funeral (Rimpiläinen 1971, 30, 123, 187-190, 233, 236, 265; Nenola 1986, 121).

Clerical funerals, which had continued until the 1930s, were gradually replaced by secular funeral songs and speeches and the music of a brass band. Singing of ecclesiastical songs at funerals of older people was still common until recently. Nowadays brass bands are disappearing.

The last tribute is paid either in a room or in the yard.

⁴³ Also on the Georgian plains, the tradition of taking the food disappeared by the beginning of this century and the number of people participating in the funeral was small.



Mihkel Puuman's funeral in the village of Sulevi at the end of the 1930s or in the early 1940s. A board is substituted for the cross.

Earlier the coffin was closed before taking it out; nowadays, it is carried to the graveyard open, as other peoples do. The cross and the wreaths are carried out first, followed by the lid and the coffin. Then come the relatives and other people. Indigenous Caucasians carry the coffin out last. Before leaving the room, Armenians and Russians lift the coffin three times, Georgians walk three rounds with the coffin, 'to make the dead giddy so that he/she will not come back' (Kuutman). This is also the usual procedure at funerals of Estonians, where the coffin is carried by their Caucasian friends, relatives and colleagues. This internationally known confusing of the dead (Lukkarinen 1914, 2; Chursin 1905, 70; Clemen 1920, 68; Kemppinen 1967, 37) was earlier known in Estonia as well, while in Setumaa it is found even in these days.



Anton Angelstok's funeral at Sulevi in 1929.

The deceased is carried out with the feet foremost, as 'a man always walks feet first'. In some individual cases, people remembered that this was the procedure to prevent the soul from haunting and to forestall a new death in the family.⁴⁴ The coffin is carried very carefully, but the former requirement, common in Estonia, that the coffin should not touch the doorjamb, has been forgotten. Russians and Georgians hit the coffin three times against the doorjamb before leaving the room, Georgians hit it additionally against the closed door to avoid a new death in the family. Indigenous Caucasians consider it important to close the door and the gates just after the coffin has been

⁴⁴ The bridegroom had to carry the bride in his arms out of her home feet first lest she would return home (Veisman).

taken out, which is also an internationally known requirement⁴⁵ (Sartori 1910, 143, 144; Päss 1939, 229; Mashkin 1862, 81; Kemppinen 1967, 38).

At funerals of Estonians, the coffin and the cross are mostly carried by male neighbours or relatives. At Punase-Lageda, in some families, the coffin and the cross were carried by godchildren of the dead, in the case of a female deceased by women. In some places in Estonia, the cross was also carried by godchildren (ERM 166, 13 (44) < Reigi). Earlier there was no pay for carrying the coffin and cross in settlements. Indigenous Caucasians, Greeks and Russians tie a handkerchief or a towel around the carrier's arm as a remuneration.⁴⁶ From the 1950s, under the influence of neighbours, Estonians from the village of Estonia started to give towels, handkerchiefs and shirts to the carriers. At other settlements, this is done only in mixed families. Estonians of Punase-Lageda have made some blunders out of ignorance, for instance a woman tied the towel to the wrong arm of the undertaker, at which Russians were annoyed, saying that it was no wedding.

Formerly, Estonian settlers carried the coffin on a frame, later it was carried on shoulders or with cloths. When the dead is being carried out, all flowers, wreaths and the leftovers of wreath-making are taken out. As in Estonia, leaving them behind is an omen of an imminent new death (Raadla 1939, 68; EA 213, 286, 320; Loorits 1932, 196). If the coffin is carried by indigenous Caucasians, they walk with it around the house three times. This custom to prevent haunting was also known in Estonia (Viluoja 1971, 27).

If the graveyard was far away, the coffin was taken there in a horse-carriage or on a sledge, at the present time in a lorry. The platform of the lorry is decorated with twigs and flowers. Older people or the relatives of the dead take their seats beside the coffin, the others go on foot. Since the 1950s, leftovers of wreath-making and flowers are thrown on the way of the funeral procession, a custom earlier not known at any settlements. In Estonia it is a tradition to throw spruce twigs on the way, but it is not known when this custom began to spread here.⁴⁷ On the way to the graveyard, different bans and omens were followed, which only a few settlers can recall. At the villages of Estonia and Punase-Lageda it was thought that to avoid a new death, one should not look back when being in a funeral procession or to step in at your own place. The first belief has been noted also in Estonia (Allik 1970, 94) and among Germans⁴⁸ (Sartori 1910, 148). In Võrumaa, as late as a decade ago, relatives of

⁴⁵ There was also an opposite requirement that the doors and gates had to be open during the funeral (Kotlyarevski 1891, 229; Strogalshchikova 1986, 76).

⁴⁶ Germans presented the carriers with white gloves and handkerchiefs (Sartori 1910, 142). In Latvia, mittens were tied to carriers' sleeves (Ustinova 1980, 143), Russians gave them kerchiefs (Shangina 1984, 205).

⁴⁷ In the village of Uus-Estonia (New-Estonia) in Kuban, Russia, Estonians do not follow this tradition even these days (EA 203, 271).

⁴⁸ Several peoples know the ban on looking back towards the churchyard when returning home (Smirnov 1920, 34; Melik-Shakhnazarova 1893, 200; Chursin 1905, 71, Juvas-Reponen 1939, 291; Talve 1979, 191).

the dead were not allowed to look back on the way to the graveyard as long as the house of mourning was in sight. At Sulevi and Punase-Lageda, it was remembered that the funeral procession should not be looked at through a window (EA 203, 187), but they could not explain this requirement. Again, this is a belief known to other peoples (the Mari): neglect of this ban could also bring misfortune to the family of the person who looked back (Holmberg 1914, 16; Haavamäe 1934, 442). In the village of Estonia it was believed that when somebody crossed the road in front of the funeral procession, bumps and lumps would grow on his/her body, which could be cured only with the hand of the dead. At Punase-Lageda the sex and the age of the person to die next were predicted by the person who first met the funeral procession. It was said that once in the village of Estonia, a woman with twins in a pram was in the way of a funeral procession, and soon two children perished in a fire accident in the village. At Punase-Lageda, the sex of the person to die next was predicted also by the sex of the person who passed the person carrying the cross. The same prediction is, at places, still remembered in Estonia (EA 213, 319, 342, 343). In the settlements, meeting a funeral procession is considered to be an evil omen. Those who meet a funeral procession will stop and men take off their hats to pay tribute to the dead.

Caretakers remain at home to clean the rooms and lay the tables. In the village of Estonia, caretakers accompany the dead halfway and then come back. As regards indigenous Caucasians, only relatives go to the graveyard. Besides the practical need, cleaning of the house of mourning has a magical precautionary significance. At Sulevi this is given less importance, but in the village of Estonia, where the cleaning is faster and more thorough, it is more important. At Sulevi, they clean the rooms usually only after the return from the graveyard. At all settlements, the benches, the bed and the chairs which had been used as bier for the dead, are taken out of the house. At the villages of Estonia, Salme and Leselidze in some families, these are turned upside down immediately after the corpse has been taken out; Estonians regard it as a Caucasian tradition. At Punase-Lageda, a fast cleaning is thought to be a Russian custom, and as at Sulevi, they clean after they have returned from the graveyard: 'As soon as the corpse has been taken out, the bucket is ready, everything is washed, lest "neschastie" (*несчастие*, the Russian word for "misfortune") would happen. This is not an Estonian custom. When aunt Liisa died, a Russian asked, "Who is going to scrub the floor?" Then I said that my aunt was not of this religion, this is not our way, this is not done in an Estonian village. We locked the door and when Endla came back from the graveyard, she did the scrubbing' (Reisman).



Lilli Reisman, a former cultural worker who devised the secular ceremony at Punase-Lageda in the 1950s and 1960s.

Orthodox peoples of the settlements had also dissenting demands not to take the sweepings out at once: these had to be swept into the corner of the room. This was earlier known also in Estonia; keeping of the sweepings was believed to preserve the fortune of the house (Raadla 1939, 47). Turning of the chairs and benches which had served as the bier for the dead to avoid a new death is still practised at settlements by indigenous Caucasians and East Slavs. This internationally known custom⁴⁹ can be associated with the requirement for a speedy wrecking of the bier, which is also known in Estonia (Allik 1970, 56; Lang 1981, 59). In the case of Estonian settlers, it is not quite clear whether it is an alien influence or preservation of an old custom in some individual families.

The Funeral Feast

When the funeral procession arrives at the graveyard, uninvited mourners are already there. If the coffin is carried by Georgians, they walk with it once or thrice around the grave before putting it on the cross-bars or on the edge of the grave, to avoid haunting or a new death in the family (EA 203, 185–186). Earlier this was also done in Estonia (Eisen 1897, 48; Eisen 1920, 165; Viluoja 1971, 83).

At the graveyard, a speech is given by a school teacher or a churchwarden and clerical funeral songs are sung. At Salme, Sulevi and Leselidze nowadays secular songs are sung at Estonian funerals and a brass band is playing dirges. Wishes of the dead are also taken into consideration: 'Eduard Vatman, himself a member of the brass band, asked that all kinds of music should be played. They did not play polkas, but they did play waltzes. Afterwards the Georgians said: Estonians dance in the graveyard. Elga Vatman asked that the choir should sing. They would not sing merry tunes, but songs like *Head ööd* ('Good Night'), *Ööbiku surm* ('Death of the Nightingale'), *Sügishommik*

⁴⁹ Germans, Finns, the Setu, Karelians and Latvians turned the chairs and tables upside down (Sartori 1910, 143; Waronen 1898, 93; Väisänen 1924, 216; Konkka 1985, 58; Vuorela 1977, 624; Ustinova 1980, 142; Virtaranta 1961, 260).

(‘Autumn Morning’) are in every collection of funeral songs, even in Estonia’ (Kuldkepp).

Before the coffin is shut, relatives come to bid farewell to the dead. One of them spreads a shroud on the face of the deceased. Unlike their neighbours, Estonians leave natural flowers in the coffin. People of other ethnicities often try to insist that before closing the coffin the flowers should be taken out because they may cause a sooner decay of the corpse.

The grave was dug some days or a day before the funeral. As among other peoples, at the villages of Estonia and Salme the grave is dug on the funeral day. Thus an old custom has been re-established. Digging of the grave as late as possible was believed to prevent the walls of the grave from falling in, which was a bad omen (Allik 1970, 97, 98; Lang 1981, 66). From the settlements, this belief was remembered only in Estonia: ‘If the grave caves in, the next person will die very soon in the family’⁵⁰ (Ryabich). Often the Estonians had the graves dug by relatives; sometimes close relatives are not allowed to do it. Some food and drinks were taken to the gravediggers while they were working. In the village of Estonia, on the example of neighbours, pieces of cloth, shirts and towels are given to the diggers. Estonians of the villages of Salme and Leselidze have begun to pay money to the gravediggers. Money and treating to food and drinks was the pay to gravediggers in Estonia, too. Instead of towels, mittens were given here.

In most cases, the coffin is laid in the grave by means of ropes, more seldom by means of towels or straps. In a mixed family at Punase-Lageda, the straps were cut to pieces and given to caretakers as souvenir remembrance. In former times in Estonia the coffin used to be let down into the grave by means of towels.

At Salme, in some rare cases, the coffin is received in the grave by two men. For this purpose the grave is dug a little wider and no other means are used. That custom was taken from Georgian neighbours, whose graves were considerably lower. But there are some communications about receiving the coffin in the grave also in Estonia (ERM 165, 22/(3) 70 < Jõelähtme; AES — Kadrina 1932; RKM II 82, 585 (65) < Torma); more precise data about the prevalence of this custom have not been found.⁵¹

A wreath or flowers and green twigs are thrown onto the coffin in the grave. The mourners throw three handfuls of earth into the grave, whereas only a few remember the Christian origin of the custom. According to a popular understanding, this helped to forget the deceased sooner and was the last tribute to him or her. At funerals of Georgians, Armenians and Greeks, the mourners hurry away even before the grave is filled up. The Estonians are astonished

⁵⁰ At the villages of Sulevi and Punase-Lageda as well as in Estonia, a new death was predicted from the caving-in of the grave soon after the funeral (Allik 1970, 99; EA 225, 455).

⁵¹ This custom has been observed also at Vepsians (Strogalshchikova 1986, 74) and today it is found at Mordovians.

by this custom. In their opinion, this is 'savage-like'. But from the beginning of the 1960s, an analogous communication was found also in Estonia (RKM II 121, 252, 3/(4) < Väike-Maarja).

At the filling-up of the grave, Estonian settlers of the village of Sulevi treat the mourners to pies, buns, bread-and-butter, wine and vodka. In the village of Salme, this is done later, at the gates of the graveyard. At Salme, the custom spread as an influence of Sulevi from the 1930s. By the 1910s, the custom was disappearing in Estonia and it was replaced by treating the poor (Eisen 1897: 26; Eisen 1919, 42; Reiman 1915, 158, 160; Raadla 1939, 72; Loorits 1949, 84). At Salme, lately, a spacious shelter was erected in the graveyard, where funeral feasts were held.

The food that had been taken to the graveyard could not be taken back home. This requirement was also known in Estonia. Everything was eaten up at the graveyard or given to the mourners; leftovers of drinks were poured on the ground at the gates of the graveyard. Any food left over predicted a new death in the family. Estonians of other settlements were not used to having a meal in the graveyard. Today, some Estonian mixed families serve sweets and rice porridge at the graveyard, which is a custom of local East Slavs. However, most Estonians try to evade porridge-eating even at funerals of Russians. Up to the present time, people have a meal at the graveyard in eastern Estonia and Setumaa (Lang 1981, 69; Moora 1976, 87).



Helmi Lestman keening on her mother's grave in 1941 at Salme. Four years before, the children's father had been arrested.

A cross decorated with bands or a wreath is put at the head of the grave. After having decorated the grave with flowers and wreaths, people leave the graveyard. The sex of the next person to die is predicted, at Sulevi, Salme and Ülem-Linda by the sex of the last person and, at Alam-Linda by the sex of the first person, to leave the graveyard. The first version was widely spread in Estonia while the Livs kept an eye on who was the first to leave from the grave (Loorits 1932, 197). Georgians and Greeks predict death to the last person to leave. It was also believed in Estonia that the last one to leave will bring along death (Loorits 1949, 89).

The mourners head for the house of mourning to a funeral feast. In the yard, hands were washed. This was particularly important for neighbours of other ethnicities. In earlier times, Georgians also used to wash their faces (Chursin

1905, 74; Mashurko 1894, 344). Estonians explain this habit just from the aesthetic point of view.

At the villages of Estonia and Salme, on the example of the neighbours, sometimes tents are put up in the yard for the funeral feast. There would not be enough room in the house for several hundred mourners. Following the example of indigenous Caucasians, in the village of Estonia it has become a tradition that men and women sit at separate tables, which is, again, an old custom (Animelle 1854, 144; Shein 1890, 555; Päss 1939, 237; Fedyanovich 1990, 112). At the funeral feast, people eat and drink and give speeches. The first course of the funeral feast at Salme and Sulevi was cabbage soup (nowadays borsch and *kharcho*), at the villages of Estonia and Ülem-Linda chicken soup, at Punase-Lageda cabbage stew. The same dishes were known to be ceremonial in Estonia. For the second course, potatoes and meat were served, but at Salme, Sulevi and Punase-Lageda black pudding and jellied meat were served, at the villages of Estonia and Ülem-Linda they served roast pork. During the first course, vodka was drunk; wine was served during the second course. As a dessert, rice or semolina porridge with fruit jelly or compote was offered and at Ülem-Linda, rice soup was served. At Sulevi and Salme, buns and pies with coffee (in cold weather) or with fruit jelly (in warm weather) were served. In recent times, in addition to Estonian funeral dishes, also the dishes of neighbours are served: cabbage rolls, chops, paprika filled with rice, chicken with nut sauce or *satsivi*, home-made cheese (*sulguni*), vegetable salads. At the villages of Salme and Estonia, Caucasian funeral dishes are also served: bean porridge (*lobia*), fried fish and sweet fried macaroni. It is a tendency that new dishes are more often served in mixed families and at the funerals of young people, where there are more people of other ethnicities. In the village of Estonia, Estonian dishes have completely been replaced by everyday and funeral dishes of the neighbours. Instead of pork, they serve the Caucasian gravy — *salyanka* — made with tomatoes, onions and paprika. Although it is strictly forbidden for the Georgians of the settlements to eat meat at funerals,⁵² they do not refuse it at funeral feasts of Estonians. ‘They are always so contemptuous about it. But then they are the first to come to eat meat at Estonian funerals’ (Truuman) Georgians say, ‘how can you eat flesh when there’s flesh (i.e. the corpse) in the house?’ (EA 203, 168–169). The ban on eating meat is not so strict for Armenians of the settlements, who serve cabbage rolls with meat at a funeral feast (EA 207, 375). It is known that Lutheran peoples had to butcher an animal and cook dishes of meat. Armenians of the settlements always had fried fish at the funeral feast, because ‘it will reach the deceased as quickly as the river current’ (EA 207, 375, 378, 379). Georgians do not use knives and forks at the funeral feast (actually they do not use them very often in their everyday life).

⁵² Not everywhere in Georgia it was forbidden to eat meat at funerals, Lenten dishes were sometimes eaten at funerals of young people (Volkova, Dzhavahishvili 1982, 144, 150). Meat was not served at other Orthodox peoples sometimes only during the Lent. A strict ban on eating meat was seldom observed (Shein 1890, 527).

At villages, funeral dishes are usually cooked by the same women, less often by men. At Caucasian funerals, dishes are often cooked by men.

With the funeral feast, the funeral comes to an end.

Summary

During the past century, the disintegration of feudalism had a great influence on Estonian ethnic culture, causing gradual recession of traditional customs and lessening of parochial differences. The same tendency was also observed at settlements, where traditions and even the language of the emigrants from different parishes (Vilbaste 1960, Vääri 1960, 425, 428) became homogeneous within one village. Still, some older women of the settlements remember various old traditions, and for some of them, no counterparts have been found in Estonia, but there is no doubt about their Estonian origin (requirements for sewing grave-clothes, bans on the way of a funeral procession).

The Soviet regime put an end to the reclusion of Estonian settlements with regard to their Orthodox neighbours. It is characteristic of Orthodox peoples to preserve their old traditions for a long time, while the reformed Lutheran church exercised a greater influence on folk beliefs. The Mingrelians and Svans who arrived to Estonian settlements in the 1940s and 1950s had preserved remarkable characteristic features of the feudal society and in comparison with earlier Orthodox settlers, they had more conservative traditions.

The formation of the settlement of foreign ethnicities with more conservative traditions influenced the development of the ethnic culture of Estonians in another direction. Going to the funerals of the neighbours and relatives of other ethnicities, Estonians come across several phenomena which were earlier known also in Estonia, but which have mostly been forgotten by the present time (collecting money for the dead person, confusing of the deceased). Estonians look down on some traditions of their neighbours, especially as regards keening. In the same way, the neighbours ridicule Estonian funeral traditions. The Orthodox and Lutheran world outlooks and different cultural levels come into conflict. Mutual disparagement between neighbours is common to all humanity; this can be met in the case of peoples living close to each other but also within one ethnicity, depending on different regions, villages and families⁵³ (Westermarck 1991, 83; Oinas 1979, 114).

Orthodox peoples of the settlements have a strong influence on Estonians, prescribing even the proper way to close the coffin. The influence of other peoples on Estonians depends on their family ties and also on how many neighbours participate in the ceremony. When a person dies, only close relatives are present, but at the funeral, there are more people, representatives of other peoples among them. Their influence on the traditions of Estonians grows respectively (Mikkor 1992).

⁵³ In Estonia, 'dark' people were mistrusted in former times: people were afraid of their evil eye (Loorits 1932a, 21; Eisen 1926, 96).

Under the influence of the neighbours several traditions forgotten by Estonians have begun to revive, whereby Estonians often consider them to be cultural loans (wakes held during the night time, going to see the dead person, covering of the mirrors). An interesting custom is the receipt of the coffin in the grave, some cases of which are known also in Estonia. Most of the cultural loans by Estonians can be found at the village Estonia (giving towels as a pay for attendants of the funeral, keeping the gates and the doors open before the funeral).

In the settlements, it is a foreign loan to cast twigs on the way of the funeral procession. It is not always clear whether the settlers have preserved an old tradition or have taken it over from neighbours, as is the case with turning the chairs upside down after the dead body has been taken out.

From the elements of material culture, funeral dishes and the substances for the preservation of the dead have been taken over in the first place.

The traditions that had become homogeneous at one time have again become varied due to family ties with other peoples. Differences in the speed of development are the most outstanding differences in the settlements. The village of Sulevi seems to be at a stage of forgetting the traditions, while in the village of Estonia, the main tendency is to take up customs from the neighbours. In the opinion of the author, the village of Salme is somewhere in between. From the village of Punase-Lageda, many cases are known of neighbours having exerted influence on the traditions of Estonians, but the influence of other peoples is less than expected. There are no mountain peoples among the settlers of Punase-Lageda. A few old regional differences between settlements have been preserved: burying without footwear and carrying of the cross by godchildren at Punase-Lageda, stopping of the clocks in the village of Estonia and treating the mourners at the graveyard at Salme and Sulevi. There are differences in funeral dishes as well.



Elviina Jakobson has buried two husbands (one of them an Estonian and the other a Turk) and her daughter Selma. For her Turkish husband, she laid an eau de toilette and a handkerchief into the coffin, for her daughter, who was a seamstress, she laid her sewing necessities. Aunt Elviina complained to Marika Mikkor that as her grave-clothes had been stolen by the Chechens during the Abkhazian–Georgian war, she could not die. Photo by Y. Ehrlich, 1996.

Sources and materials used

Subject collection and manuscripts

Estonian National Museum

EA = The Ethnographic Archive

EA 126 = H. Arst. Pieces from the customs of Sukhumi Estonians. 1969, 68–134

KV = Answers from the correspondents.

KV 362 = A. Truupõld. Pieces from the life of Estonians at the former Estonian settlements in the Caucasus. (Ethnographic descriptions) 1980, 117–330

Estonian Museum of History

AM. F. 284 = Jakob Nerman's collection about Estonian settlements in the Caucasus.

AM. F. 309 = Estonian settlements in the Soviet Union (1895–1983).

Leselidze village Soviet of the Gagra region and Vladimirovka village Soviet of the Gulripshi region of the Abkhaz ASSR

House registers = (Pohozyaistvennaya kniga Nr. 4–9 Leselidzeskogo sel'skogo Soveta narodnyh deputatov na 1983, 1984, 1985 g.) House register No. 4–9 of the Leselidze Village Soviet Executive Committee for the years 1983, 1984, 1985).

(Pohozyaistvennaya kniga 9–12 Vladimirovskogo sel'skogo Soveta na 1983, 1984, 1985 g.) House register 9–12 of the Vladimir Village Soviet for the years 1983, 1984, 1985.

Registry Office of the Executive Committee of the People's Deputies of the Gagra region of the Abkhaz ASSR

Parish register = (Salme Ewangeli Lutteruse Koggodusse kirriku ramat 1885. aastast.) Parish register of the Evangelic-Lutheran Congregation of the village of Salme for the year 1885.

Collections of the Estonian Literary Museum and Estonian Folklore Archive

H — folklore collection of J. Hurt, 1860–1906

ERA — folklore collection of the Estonian Folklore Archives, 1927–1944,

RKM — folklore collection of the Estonian Folklore Archives of the Estonian Literary Museum of the Estonian Academy of Sciences, 1945–

ERM — folklore collection of the Estonian National Museum, 1815–1925

AES — folklore collection of Academic Society of Mother Tongue

E — folklore collection of M. J. Eisen, 1880–1934

Allik, E. 1970. Estonian death omens. — Degree dissertation in the Chair of Estonian and Comparative Folklore of Tartu University. Tartu.

Lang, M. 1981. Former funeral traditions in East-Estonia. — Degree dissertation in the Chair of Ethnology of Tartu University. Tartu.

Mikkor, M. 1985. Traditions connected with the birth of an Estonian child in the village of Sulevi, Abkhazia. — Term paper in the Chair of Ethnology of Tartu University. Tartu.

Mikkor, M. 1988. Traditions connected with death at Caucasian Estonians. — Degree dissertation in the Chair of Ethnology of Tartu University. Tartu.

Raadla, A. 1939. An outline of Estonian funeral traditions. I. Seminar paper in the Department of folklore of the Literary Museum.

Sirijos-Giraite, D. 1971. Common traits of cult of the dead in Estonian, Liv, Latvian and Lithuanian folklore and mythology. — Term paper in the Chair of literature and folklore of Tartu University.

Viluoja, E. 1971. A conception of death in Estonian folk beliefs. Precautions against revenants. — Degree dissertation in the Chair of literature and folklore of Tartu University.

(All term papers and degree dissertations are in Estonian)

References

Animelle, N. 1854. Byt belorusskikh krestyan. — *Etnograficheski Sbornik, izdavaiemyi Imperatorskim Russkim Geograficheskim Obshchestvom*, vyp. II. Sankt-Peterburg, pp. 111–268.

Ariste, P. 1974. *Vadjalane kätkest kalmuni*. Tartu.

Balov, A. 1898. Bolezni i ikh lechenie; smert, pohorony i pominki; zagrobnaya zhizn. — *Etnograficheskoe Obozrenie*, 4, pp. 86–92.

Boecler, J. W., Kreutzwald, Fr. R. 1854. *Der Ehsten abergläubische Gebräuche, Weisen und Gewohnheiten von J. W. Boecler. Mit auf die gegenwart Bezüglichen Anmerkungen beleuchtet von Dr. Fr. R. Kreutzwald*. St. Petersburg.

Bogoslavski, P. S. 1924. *Materialy po narodnomu bytu, fol'kloru i literaturnoi starine*. Permskiy kraievedcheski sbornik, vyp I. Perm, pp. 70–83.

Clemen, C. 1920. *Das Leben nach dem Tode in Glauben der Menschheit*. Leipzig, Berlin.

Dzhanashvili, M. 1893. Kartvel'skiya poveriya. *Sbornik Materyalov dlya Opisaniya Mestnostei i Plemen Kavkaza*, vyp. 17, 144–173. Tiflis.

Eisen, M. J. 1897. *Kodukäijad. Katse nende loomu seletuseks ja 40 juttu sur-nute hingede ilmumisest*. Narva.

- Eisen, M. J. 1919. Eesti mütoloogia I. Tartu.
- Eisen, M. J. 1920. Eesti uuem mütoloogia. Tallinn.
- Eisen, M. J. 1926. Eesti vana usk. Eesti mütoloogia IV. EKST, Nr. 21. Tartu.
- Fedyanovich, T. P. 1990. Pohoronnye i pominal'nye obryady Mordvy. Bytovaya kul'tura Mordvy. Saransk, pp. 96-125.
- Fieandt, K. v. 1932. Vanhan Sammatin kansanomaisesta kalenterista. (Ajankutapoja, juhlapäivia, ilman ennustuksia). Kotiseutu, 24–42.
- Frazer, J. G. 1974. The Golden Bough. A Study in Magic and Religion.
- Georgadze, D. G. 1977. Kul't mertvykh v gornoi Vostochnoi Gruzii (po etnograficheskim materialam). Avtoreferat dissertatsii na soiskanie uchenoi stepeni kandidata istoricheskikh nauk. Tbilisi.
- Gracheva, G. N. 1976. Chelovek, smert i zemlya mertvykh u nganassan. Priroda i chelovek v religioznykh predstavleniakh narodov Sibiri i Severa. Leningrad, pp. 44–46.
- Haavamäe, A. 1934. Vatjalaisia kuolemaan ja hautaamisen liittyviä tapoja ja uskomuksia. Virittäjä, 435–446.
- Harva, U. 1935. Varsinais Suomen henkistä kansankulttuuria. Varsinais-Suomen historia III:1. Porvoo.
- Harva, U. 1942. Mordvalaisten muinaisusko. Suomensuvun uskonnot 6. Porvoo, Helsinki.
- Harva, U. 1948. Suomalaisten muinaisusko. Suomensuvun uskonnot 7. Porvoo, Helsinki.
- Holmberg, U. 1914. Tsheremissien uskonto. Suomensuvun uskonnot 5. Porvoo.
- Hupel, A. W. 1777. Topographische Nachrichten von Lief und Ehistland. II. Riga.
- Hämäläinen, A. 1930. Beiträge zur Ethnographie der Ostfinnen. Suomalais-ugrilaisen Seuran Aikakauskirja XLIV, 1. Helsinki, pp. 1–160.
- Jannsen, J. W. 1874. Mõned vanad Läti ja Eesti rahva pruugid surnute matmise juures. Eesti Postimehe lisaleht. Nr. 50, 51, 52.
- Jung, J. 1879. Eesti rahva vanast usust, kombedest ja juttudest. Kodumaalt, nr. 6. Tartu.
- Juvas, M., Reponen, A. 1939. Kuolemaan liittyviä tapoja ja uskomuksia. Kansantieteellisiä muistiinpanoja Ilomantsin itäkylistä. Kansantieteellinen arkisto III, Forssa, pp. 283–293.
- Karely 1983: Karely Karel'skoi ASSR. Petrozavodsk.

- Kemppinen, I. 1967. Haudantakainen elämä karjalaisen muinaisuskon ja ver-
tailevan uskontotieteen valossa. Karjalan Tutkimusseuran Julkaisuja 1. Hel-
sinki.
- Konkka, U. 1985. Ikuinen ikävä. Karjalaiset riitti-itkut. Suomalaisen Kirjal-
lisuuden Seuran Toimituksia 428. Helsinki.
- Kotlyarevski, A. 1891. O pogrebal'nykh obychayakh yazycheskikh slavyan.
Sochineniya A. A. Kotlyarevskago. t. III .Sbornik Otdeleniya Russkago Ya-
zyka i Slovestnosti Imperatorskoi Akademii Nauk, t. XLIX. Sankt Peterburg,
pp. 1–296.
- Kremleva, I. A. 1980. Pohoronno-pominal'naya obrjadnost russkogo naselenia
Permskoi obl. Polevye isledovaniya instituta Etnografii. Moskva, pp. 21–30.
- Loorits, O. 1927. Liivi rahva usund. II. Tartu.
- Loorits, O. 1932. Der Tod in der livischen Volksüberlieferung. ÕES To-
imetised XXVI, Tartu, pp. 170–200.
- Loorits, O. 1932a. Eesti rahvausundi maailmavaade. Tartu.
- Loorits, O. 1949. Grundzüge des estnischen Volksglaubens. I. Lund.
- Luce, J. W. L. 1827. Wahrheit und Muthmassung, Beytrag zur ältesten
Geschichte der Insel Oesel. Pernau.
- Lukkarinen, J. 1914. Inkeriläisten vainajainpalveluksesta. Kansatieteellisiä
tutkielmia. Suomalais-ugrilaisen Seuran Toimituksia XXXV:7. Helsinki, pp.
1–18.
- Malija, J. M. 1982. Odezhda abhazov. Odezhda i zhilishchshe abhazov: Mate-
rialy dlya istoriko-etnograficheskogo atlasa Gruzi. Tbilisi, pp. 5–126.
- Manninen, I. 1924. Setude matusekommetest. Eesti Keel III, pp. 10–19.
- Mamaladze, G. 1893. Narodnye obychai i poveriya guriitsev. V dvukh chas-
tyakh. Sbornik Materyalov dlya Opisaniya Mestnostei i Plemen Kavkaza, vyp.
17, Tiflis, pp. 15–123.
- Maslova, G. S. 1984. Narodnaya odezhda v vostochnoslavyanskikh tradit-
sionnykh obychayakh i obryadakh XIX- nachala XX v. Moskva.
- Mashkin. 1862. Byt krestyan kurskoi guberni Obojanskago uyezda. Etnogra-
ficheski Sbornik, vyp. V, pp. 1–119.
- Mashurko, M. 1894. Iz oblasti narodnoi fantazi i byta Tifliskoi i Kutaiskoi gub.
Sbornik Materyalov dlya Opisaniya Mestnostei i Plemen Kavkaza, vyp. 18, Ti-
flis, pp. 228–410.
- Melik-Shahnazarov, J. 1893. Iz poveri, predrazsudkov i narodnykh primet
armjan Zangezurskago uyezda. Sbornik Materyalov dlya Opissaniya Mest-
nostei i Plemen Kavkaza, vyp. 17, pp. 193–201.
- Mikkor, M. 1992. Kaukaasia eestlaste matusekombestikust. Eesti Rahva Mu-
useumi Aastaraamat 39. Tartu, 167–188.

- Mikkor, M. 1993. Surmaga seotud kommetest ersamordva külades Saba jevos ja Povodimovos. Eksperimentaalne folkloristika. Tartu, pp. 32–35.
- Mikkor, M. 1994. Surmaga seotud tavadest ersamordva külades Sabajevo ja Povodimovos. Eesti Rahva Muuseumi Aastaraamat 40. Tartu, pp. 153–189.
- Mikkor, M. 1994a. Kaukaasia eestlaste surmakujutelmadest. Akadeemia, pp. 1234–1267, 1481–1496
- Mikkor, M. 1995. Soikkola isurite matusetavad. Akadeemia, pp. 1889–1926.
- Mikkor, M. 1996. Linnud, loomad, ebaselge päritoluga hääled ja unenäod surmaennetena kaukaasia eestlastel. Eesti Rahva Muuseumi Aastaraamat 41, Tartu, pp. 167–181.
- Moora, H. 1956. Eestlaste muistsest usundist. Religiooni ja ateismi ajaloost Eestis. Tallinn, pp. 7–42.
- Moora, A. 1976. Tavandi ja peotoitudest eesti külas. Etnograafiamuuseumi Aastaraamat XXIX. Tallinn, pp. 47–100.
- Narody mira 1962 = Narody mira: Etnograficheskie ocherki. Narody Kavkaza, t. III. 1962. Moskva.
- Nenola, A. 1986. Miessydäminen nainen. Naisnäkökulmia kulttuuriin. Tietoliipas 102. Helsinki.
- Oinas, F. J. 1979. Naabrid ja võõrad keeles ning rahvaluules. Kalevipoeg kütkeis. Toronto, pp. 97–116.
- Ollila, R. 1932. Kuolemaan liittyvät tavat ja käsitykset entisajan Sammatissa. Kotiseutu. pp. 87–94.
- Paulaharju, S. 1924. Syntymä, lapsuus ja kuolema. Vienan Karjalan tapoja ja uskomuksia. Kalevalaseuran julkaisuja 2. Porvoo.
- Päss, E. 1939. Death, burial and life beyond the grave with the Estonian Ingers and the Votes. Õpetatud Eesti Seltsi Aastaraamat. 1937, No II. Tartu, pp. 193–259.
- Reiman, H. 1915. Eestlaste matusekombed. Eesti kultura. IV. Jurjev, pp. 123–163.
- Rimpiläinen, O. 1971. Läntisen perinteen mukainen hautauskäytäntö Suomessa ennen Isoavihaa. Suomen Kirkkohistoriallisen Seuran Toimituksia 84. Helsinki.
- Rombandeyeva, J. I. 1980. Pogrebal'nyi obryad Sygvinskikh mansi. Semeinaya obrjadnost narodov Sibiri. Moskva, pp. 232–238.
- Roos, A. 1992. Jumalaga, Kars ja Erzurum. Türgi eestlaste ajalugu. Tallinn.
- Rosenplänter, J. H. 1823. Ueber Kirchhöfe und Beerdigung der Todten, nebst einem Anhang den Pernauschen Kirchhof betreffend. Pernau.
- Russwurm, C. 1861. Sagen aus Hapsal, der Wiek, Ösel und Runö. Reval.

- Ränk, G. 1949. Die Heilige Hinterecke im Hauskult der Völker Nordosteuropas und Nordasiens. FFC 137, vol. LVII. Helsinki.
- Sagaradze, M. 1899. Obytschai i verovania v Imereti. SMOMPK, vyp. 26, pp. 1–46.
- Salmio, L. 1976. Kuolinhetken toimet Länsi-Suomessa. Kotiseutu, pp. 24–32.
- Sartori, P. 1910. Sitte und Brauch. Handbücher zur Volkskunde. Bd. 5. Leipzig.
- Shangina, I. 1984. Prilozhenie. Obryadovaya odezhda vostochnoslavjanskikh narodov v sobranii Gosudarstvennogo muzeya Etnografii narodov SSSR. Maslova, G. S. 1984. Narodnaya odezhda v vostochnoslavjanskikh traditsionnykh obyčajakh i obryadakh XIX- nachala XX v. Moskva, pp. 156–213.
- Shein, P. 1890. Materialy dlya izuchenia byta i yazyka russkago naselenia Severo-Zapadnago kraja. T. 51, ch. 2, nr 3. SORJAS.
- Smirnov, V. 1920. Narodnye pohorony i prichitaniya v Kostromskom kraje. Kostromskoye Nauchnoe Obshtshestvo po izutsheniu mestnogo kraja, vyp. XV. Vtoroi Etnograficheskii sbornik. Kostroma, pp. 21–126.
- Strogalshchikova, Z. I. 1986. Pogrebal'naya obryadnost vepsov. Etnokul'turnye protsessy v Karelii. Petrozavodsk, pp. 65–85.
- Suurhasko, J. J. 1985. Semeinye obryady i verovania karel, konets XIX – nachalo XX b. Leningrad.
- Talve, I. 1979. Suomen kansankulttuuri. Historiallisia päälinjoja. Helsinki.
- Tedre, Ü. 1973. Eesti pulmad. Lühiülevaade muistsetest kosja- ja pulmakommetest. Tallinn.
- Tedre, Ü. 1985. Elutähtpäevadest ja nendega seotud kombed. Vanadest Eesti rahvakommetest kaasaesete tavanditeni. Tallinn, pp. 37–80.
- Teryukov, A. I. 1979. Pogrebal'noi obryad pechorskikh komi. Polevye issledovaniya instituta Etnografii 1977. Moskva, pp. 80–86.
- Chursin, G. F. 1905. Narodnye obyčaji i verovania Kakhetii. Zapiski Kavkazskago otdela Imperatorskago Russkago Geograficheskago Obshchestva, kn. XXV, vyp. 2. Tiflis.
- Cshursin, G. F. 1956. Materialy po etnografii Abhazii. Sukhumi.
- Ustinova, M. J. 1980. Semeinye obryady latyshskogo gorodskogo naselenia v XX v. (po materialam gorodov Latgale i Kurzeme). Moskva.
- Varjola, P. 1971. Hautajaisrokka. Suomen Museo. 78, pp. 84–104.
- Varjola, P. 1980. Vainajan matkavarusteista. Kotiseutu, pp. 118–126.
- Waronen, M. 1898. Vainajainpalvelus muinaisilla suomalaisilla. Helsinki.

- Vdovin, I. 1976. Priroda i chelovek v religioznykh predstavleniakh chukchei. Priroda i chelovek v religioznykh predstavleniakh narodov Sibiri i Severa. (vtoraya polovina XIX – natshalo XX v.) Leningrad, pp. 217–253.
- Westermarck, E. 1991. Tapojen historiaa. Kuusi akadeemista esitelmää pitänyt Turussa syksyllä 1911. Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seuran Toimintuksia 545. Helsinki, Jyväskylä.
- Wiedemann, F. J. 1876. Aus dem inneren und äusseren Leben der Ehsten. St. Peterburg.
- Vilbaste, G. 1960. Kaukaasia eestlaste keelest ja rahvaluulest. Emakeele Seltsi Aastaraamat VI. Tallinn, pp. 121–131.
- Winkler, R. 1909. Der estländische Landkirchenvisitator David Dubberch und seine Zeit (1584–1603). Ein Beitrag zur estländischen Kirchengeschichte. Reval.
- Virtaranta, P. 1961. Tverin karjalaisten entistä elämää. Porvoo-Helsinki.
- Volkova, N. G. 1978. Etnicheskie protsessy v Gruzinskoj SSR. Etnicheskije i kul'turno-bytovye protsessy na Kavkaz'e. Moskva, 3–61.
- Volkova, N. G.; Dzhavahishvili, G. N. 1982. Bytovaya kul'tura Gruzii XIX–XX vekov: traditsii i innovatsii. Moskva.
- Vuorela, T. 1977. Suomalainen kansankulttuuri. Porvoo-Helsinki-Juva.
- Väisänen, A. O. 1924. Syntymä, lapsuus ja kuolema. Setukaisten tapoja ja uskomuksia. Kalevalaseuran vuosikirja, 4, 193–223.
- Vääri, E. 1960. Kaukaasia eestlaste keelest. Keel ja Kirjandus nr. 7, pp. 425–429.
- Võime, L. 1974. Eesti asustuse kujunemine Abhaasias (Salme ja Sulevi eesti asundused) XIX saj. 80-ndail aastail. Ajaloolaseid töid. V. (ÜTÜ ajalooringi kogumik.) Tartu, pp. 108–121.
- Võime, L. 1980. Tee uude ellu. Eesti asunduste ajaloost Kaukaasia Musta mere rannikul XIX saj. teisest poolest kuni 1929. Tallinn.
- Zavoiko, F. K. 1914. Verovaniya, obryady i obychai velikorossov Vladimirskoj gubernii. Etnograficheskoe obozrenie, kn. CIII-CIV. n. 3–4. Moskva, pp. 81–178.
- Zelenin, D. K. 1914. Opisanije rukopisei Uchenago Arhiva Imperatorskago Russkago Geograficheskago Obshestva. vyp. I. Petrograd.
- Zelenin, D. K. 1915. Opisanie rukopisei Uchenago Arhiva Imperatorskago Russkago Geograficheskago Obshtshestva. vyp. II.
- Zelenin, D. 1927. Russische (Ostslavische) Volkskunde. Berlin–Leipzig.