

ARTICLES

St. Stefan of Perm': A Dialogue between Traditions and the Tradition of Dialogue

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Abstract

Bishop Stefan of Perm' was a religious figure of considerable importance in medieval Russia, famous for converting a Finno-Ugrian people, the Permians (now known as the Komi) to Christianity. The Permians inhabited lands in north eastern Europe bordering the central and northern Urals, known in the Russian chronicles as Perm' Vychegodskaia and Greater Perm'. The selfless work of St. Stefan was highly appreciated by his contemporaries; thus in documents dating from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries he is listed among the most outstanding Russian Orthodox churchmen: figures such as Petr and Aleksii of Moscow, Leontii of Rostov, Sergii of Radonezh, Kirill of the White Lake, and Varlaam of Khutyn [Lytkin 1889: 13]. He was officially canonized in 1547 at Metropolitan Makarii's Council, one of the first thirty saints to be canonized in Muscovy [Golubinskii 1889: 204]. A few years after St. Stefan's death in 1396, Epifanii Premudryi, a monk at St. Sergii's Trinity Monastery, composed his *vita* [Prokhorov 1995]. To this day this work remains the chief source of historical information about St. Stefan of Perm'.

St. Stefan was born circa 1340 in the town of Ustiug in the principality of Rostov in north-east Russia. His father, Simeon, was a cleric attached to the cathedral church of the Assumption of the Holy Mother of God, while his mother was a Christian named Mary, who, according to legend, was a Komi woman who had been baptized. This would explain how St. Stefan came to speak Komi (Permian) as well as his choice of spiritual mission. Epifanii talks of an exceptionally gifted boy who learnt to read and write in just one year and rose to become kanonarch (lead chorister) and later psalm reader in the same cathedral as his father. When he was twenty Stefan took his vows in the monastery of

St. Gregory the Theologian in Rostov, where, along with his monastic duties, he studied Greek, theology, philosophy, and finally devised a Permian runic alphabet before translating liturgical texts into Komi. In 1379 St. Stefan was ordained and departed on his mission to Vychegodskaia Perm', located north of Ustiug on the river Vychegda. That mission, which was fraught with difficulty and danger, was successful, and in 1382 Stefan was consecrated bishop of a new diocese in the town of Ust'-Vym', the center of Perm'. Epifanii writes that St. Stefan built churches, monasteries and schools, where both children and adults could acquire literacy via the books in Permian that he had translated, and so learn the basic tenets of Christianity in their own tongue. On April 25 1396 (9 May N.S.) Stefan died while on a regular trip to Moscow on official business and was buried in the Church of St. Savior-in-the-Forest in the Kremlin, in the ancestral burial-vault of the ruling dynasty, the Riurikids.

The high esteem in which St. Stefan's contemporaries held him stemmed from the fact that, as Riccardo Picchio remarks: "this was the first time the Slavic Orthodox Church appeared not in the role of disciple ... but as Teacher and Apostle" [Picchio 2002: 136]; in the figure of St. Stefan of Perm', the Russian Orthodox Church confronted Permian paganism. As we know, such encounters between different religions and cultural traditions have often led to war, waged unto the death of the weaker culture. Stefan's achievement lies in his choice of dialogue over holy war, one that placed the Permian pagan tradition on an equal footing with the Orthodox Church in that dialogue. His only weapons were the Permian (Old Komi) written language and his translations of holy books. Rather surprisingly, these weapons were sufficient to conquer the Permians and bring them into the Christian fold.

In his *vita* Epifanii Premudryi aimed to create an ideal image of St. Stefan, a man whose missionary activity was equal to that of the Slavic missionaries, Cyril and Methodius, and even the Apostles. Epifanii's strategy in constructing the plot, as well as in his stylistic organization of the text of the *vita* was therefore to subordinate them totally to this task. At the same time the events described in the *vita* possess a high degree of historical authenticity, thanks to the biographer's personal acquaintance with his subject. However, there exists a quite different image of Stefan – one devised by the creative genius of the Komi people. The existence of an image of St. Stefan in the folklore of the society, that had been so successfully converted by him, indicates that a certain perception of Stefan is deeply integrated into Permian cultural tradition. This would

suggest that Permian tradition which experienced the Christianizing influence of Russian culture via Stefan of Perm' was engaged in a dialogue with it. Therefore, the creation of a specifically Permian folkloric image of Stefan became its response to Russian hagiographic tradition, a response which goes much further than expected, for Stefan's folk image bears little in common with its literary counterpart.

The distinctiveness of this image is primarily related to its semantic content. If Epifanii's Stefan is the Permian apostle, missionary and cultural hero, a man who coordinated the parameters of a new life for the Permian people, the folkloric Stefan is a miracle-worker, a prophet, and even, something of a surprise, a sorcerer. The folklore neither sees the intellectual and spiritual readiness of Stefan, his theological erudition, nor recognizes Stefan's creation of the written Komi language and the books he translated. In short, the folklore ignores what was important to Epifanii. Instead it focuses on Stefan's miraculous qualities: his ability to float on a stone raft, to prophesy, to alter the landscape, and above all, his possession of magic powers. For folklore the nature of his magic, divine or demonic, is irrelevant. Given this situation, the question that then arises is: what role do the literary texts play in the formation of the folkloric image of Stefan of Perm'?

The first legendary tales about Stefan were created within the church environment of the Perm' diocese and were part of local ecclesiastical tradition. They evolved under the direct influence of hagiographical *topoi*, but also included local legendary motifs. Subsequently, the *Повесть о Стефане Пермском* (The Tale of Stefan of Perm') was composed on the basis of these legendary motifs [Vlasov 1996b: 61-70]. Some episodes in *The Tale* have parallels with folklore texts recorded relatively recently. The image of Stefan of Perm' in *The Tale* differs substantially from that in the *vita*. Here we have the image of a miracle-worker, by whose command the pagans attacking him go blind; a man who can feed a thousand pagans with five loaves and who fells the monstrous pagan tree – the “prokudlivaia” [magic] birch. The image of Stefan as miracle worker then passes from *The Tale* into folklore where it acquires additional connotations. The semantic range of these connotations is so broad that along with general Russian folk conceptions of sanctity it also reflects earlier Komi pagan beliefs. That is why in different texts Stefan acts as saint or magician, and sometimes both simultaneously.

It may be assumed that the image of Stefan as magus and sorcerer was closer to the semi-pagan mentality of the newly baptized Komi

people than his hagiographic image. It was closer because it corresponded to their dominant mythological concepts; even the victory of Christianity over paganism was more comprehensible, since it explains the defeat of paganism as a consequence of Stefan's magical powers rather than his missionary activity. It is therefore logical that, in compiling texts about the conversion featuring Stefan, tradition makes use of old legends about sorcerers' contests. The plot of narratives of this kind is relatively straightforward: two sorcerers argue about which is the stronger. To resolve the question they challenge each other to a duel in which each casts spells on his opponent, on specific objects or natural phenomena. The loser is the one whose spells are weaker. Tradition places Stefan of Perm' in the role of one of the sorcerers, turning the sorcerers' contest into a religious trial by single combat. Epifanii Premudryi was evidently familiar with this type of story, since he took the duel by debate between Stefan and the chief sorcerer of Perm', Pam Sotnik, about the advantages of their religions and placed it in a separate chapter "О препрении волхва" (On the sorcerer's debate). Here he drew parallels with early Christian tradition and more specifically the clashes between St. Paul and Elim the sorcerer, and St. Peter and Simon the Magician [Prokhorov 1995: 111]. Perhaps it would be an oversimplification to regard the formal similarities in plot as a consequence of the transformation of literary themes in folkloric space, or, conversely, to consider the plot of the "debates" between Stefan and Pam as the hagiographer's interpretation of the folkloric battle between two sorcerers. In each case, it is possible to find arguments supporting these contentions. In my opinion, both the literary and the cultural versions of the plot about the duel between saint and sorcerer formed autonomously and independently, although the formal similarities suggest that both versions have a universal mythological proto-text. Therefore, my task here is to consider both versions from the viewpoint of the dynamics of plot-creation and to elucidate the differences in meaning and the points of interconnection. The idea of dialogue between different cultural traditions forms the semantic background: on the one hand, we have the Russian Christian written tradition, and on the other the pagan oral tradition of the Permians (Komi). Thus, the duel of the saint and the magician may be seen as one form of this dialogue.

It would be wrong to think that Christianity came to Perm' without friction. For any nation a life-changing decision such as the choice of faith must involve drama. Epifanii writes about the religious schism that shook the Permians:

И случилось, что народ разделился на две части: одна сторона называлась “новокрещенные христиане,” а вторая “неверные кумирслужители.” И не было между ними согласия, - только распря; и нет мира у них, только разногласие. И потому кумирники ненавидели христиан и не любили быть с ними едины.

[And it came to pass that the people divided into two groups, one known as “newly baptized Christians” and the other “pagan idol worshippers.” And there was no agreement among them, only argument, and no peace among them, just dispute. And so the idol worshippers hated the Christians and did not like to associate with them.] [Prokhorov 1995: 107]

The split marked a turning point in St. Stefan’s mission. On the one hand, it is apparent that for some Permians their new faith was so entrenched that they were ready to take an open stand against the pagans; on the other, it is also clear that the authority of pagan belief, albeit shaken, remained largely intact for the majority. In this situation the balance might swing either way, depending on which party advanced the most convincing arguments. Apparently, both parties were aware of this, and hence the conversion story presents new forms of “proof” that one or other party was right. For Epifanii they took the form of public debates on matters of faith, writing that one day Stefan was approached by:

некоторые от пермян, суровейшии мужи, невернии человеци, и еще некрещении суще, собравшеся мнози, и от них ови суть волсви, а друзии кудесници, инии же чаротворци и прочии старци их иже стояху за веру свою иза пошлину Пермския земля.

[some of the Permians, men most stern, unbelievers, and not baptized, many having gathered together, and among them some were wizards, and others sorcerers, and others spell-binders and other old men who stood firm for their faith for the traditional customs of the Permian land.] [Prokhorov 1995: 105]

The culmination of these discussions, as indeed, of the whole plot of the *vita*, is the episode depicting the clash between the future bishop of Perm', Stefan, and the chief sorcerer and ruler of the Permian land, Pam Sotnik. The chapter describing these events takes the form of a dialogue between the two men. The fundamental importance of this dialogue for the plot of the *vita* is that during the debate the key tenets of the two opposing faiths are discussed, and, no less significantly, the religious and cultural bases of the contrasting religious traditions, Russian and Christian versus Permian and pagan, are examined. By comparing the debate between Stefan and Pam with the biblical scenes of the struggles of Moses with Pharaoh’s sorcerers, Jannes and Jambres, St. Paul with Elim the sorcerer and St. Peter with Simon the Magician [Prokhorov FOLKLORICA 2010, Vol. XV

1995: 111], Epifanii can place this episode in a series of events in world history, and thereby imply that the future triumph of the Christian faith in Perm' is predetermined.

A.Iu. Kotylev derives the theme of the religious dispute from the tradition of Cyril and Methodius, and the description of the religious debates in the *Vita Constantini* in particular. He argues that Constantine-Cyril's disputes with the representatives of different creeds may be considered preparatory stages for his main mission. With this in mind the dispute of Stefan and Pam Sotnik may be understood as "a significant addition to the series of discussions in the *Vita Constantini*, logically culminating in the triumph of Orthodoxy and Christianity as a whole" [Kotylev 2007: 121-22]. However, the descriptions of the disputes in the *vitae* of both Constantine and Stefan may easily be considered in the broader context of the traditions of polemical literature in late Antiquity and the Middle Ages.

The sources of this tradition lie in the literary polemics of the early Christian writers and their Classical opponents, who represent pagan religion and culture as a whole. However, though similar formally, the dispute in the *vita* of Stefan of Perm' differs substantially from early Christian examples in terms of its content. For behind the pagan critics of Christianity there stood the state and millennia of Greek Classical culture, obliging Christian apologists to defend the Church and demonstrate the superiority of Christianity over the religious-philosophical systems of Antiquity; conversely, in the dispute between Stefan and Pam, the former represents Christianity as an established religion, while the sorcerer defends the beliefs of his forefathers and his people. Moreover, by the time Stefan's *vita* was composed, Christianity had a thousand-year-old tradition in Europe of converting pagans, in which incidentally religious disputation between Christian missionaries and representatives of barbarian religions is virtually absent. Debates of this kind were not possible, because to include a pagan representative in inter-faith communication would presume that the pagan religion possessed both authority and dignity, something Christian missionaries would have rejected on principle. What is more, medieval Christian missionaries, Stefan of Perm' included, were guided by the action program, outlined in Deuteronomy 7: 5: "ye shall destroy their altars, and break down their images, and hew down their groves, and burn their graven images with fire" [Limerov 2008: 71]. This position is not articulated literally in the *vita*; rather, it can be characterized as biblical reminiscence, as Faith Wigzell has shown [Wigzell 1971: 233]. To put it

differently, Epifanii Premudryi does quote directly from Deuteronomy, but rephrases the sentiments, applying them to Stefan's activity. Nevertheless, all Stefan's work in pagan Perm', as described by Epifanii, follows this program literally.

Thus, the chapter "On the sorcerer's debate" is constructed in a form of a dialogue based on the pattern of an apologetic polemical text. During the dialogue, each participant tries to demonstrate the advantages of his religion. When, however, the participants eventually exhaust their arguments, they summon each other to a trial of ordeal known as the Judgment of God. In medieval legal practice, the procedure of *judicium Dei*, known as *ordalia* was a widespread method of seeking juridical truth and was a part of the so-called "*varvarskie pravdy*" (barbarian truths), which included the first Russian legal codex, the *Russkaia pravda* (Russian Truth). Although details differ, ordeals included trial by fire and water, with the triumph of truth guaranteed by the will of the Lord [Gurevich 2003: 400-04]. In the *vita* those undergoing the test were to enter a burning house together, and then swim underwater from one hole in the ice to another. Pam, however, could not face the ordeals, thrice refusing to step into the fire, as well as being shamed by failing to get into the ice hole. His defeat was convincing proof of the strength of the Christian God, and so the Permians wholeheartedly went over to Stefan's side and demanded the death of the sorcerer. In general, the debate between Stefan and the Permian sorcerer is treated as a historically accurate fact. It is possible that the hagiographer knew about an episode of this nature, but it is also possible that Epifanii constructed his plot on the basis of well-known rhetorical figures [Kitch 1976].

A similar plot pattern features in contemporary Byzantine polemical literature. For example, in John Cantacuzenus' "Conversation with the Papal Legate Paul," one of the polemicists, the Byzantine Emperor, concludes his argumentation by suggesting that they build a bonfire and step into it together. The papal legate Paul refuses, saying, "I want to live, not die". The Emperor replies: "So do I, but I am absolutely certain that, thanks to Divine intervention on behalf of the Orthodox Christian faith, I shall not merely not burn, but will also be able to assist you. That's why I'm not afraid of stepping into the bonfire. You, it appears, have doubts about your faith, and hence you fear death" [Cantacuzenus 2008: 48]. The reference to "Divine intervention" shifts the polemic from a disputation about each other's views to the ordeal, in which the arguments of one side or the other will, allegedly, be empirically proven. In this particular case, the motif of *ordalia* is used by the author as a

literary device, but a very significant one, because for the participants in the dialogue as well as the author the Judgment of God represents the ultimate authority.

Thus, the plot of the apologetic narrative may be considered a composite structure combining a dialogue between the parties and the motif of ordeals, united by the theme of the trial of faith. For John Cantacuzenus, as for Byzantine literature in general, the literary model of polemical writing was Socratic or Platonic dialogue [Prokhorov 2008: 25]. However, unlike its classical models the Christian variant reflects a dogmatic authoritarianism, according to which truth is not achieved in the process of dialogue, but is known beforehand to one of the parties, thanks to his belief in the True God. The *ordalia* motif (or a rhetorical reference to it) serves to indicate one person's total conviction that he is right. The Byzantine model of apologetic dialogue was evidently assimilated by early Russian book learning, and by Epifanii in particular, who developed his model of dialogue, which was functionally directed towards condemning the arguments of the pagan religion as worthless, and so asserting the true faith.(1)

It must be remarked that dialogue with a pagan opponent is not a compulsory component in a hagiographical work. The main task of the hagiographer is to confirm the sanctity of the hero via the miracles he has performed. Victory in a disputation with a pagan or heretic cannot be viewed as miraculous, although it does imply the implicit participation of God on the side of the winner. The symbolic meaning of the ordeal lies in God's assistance to one of the participants with the aim of confirming the truth of his faith, and hence victory in the *ordalia* resembles a form of revelation, a miraculous gift to a charismatic hero. In the oldest versions of the polemic about faith, verbal dialogue is absent, with the theme of a trial of faith by ordeal much more to the fore. The most splendid example is a depiction of the Judgment of God at work in the seventh-century "Life of St. Patrick," patron saint of Ireland, by Miurchu moccu Machteni [Miurchu 2006: 363-90]. To determine the superiority of the pagan or Christian religion, the Irish king Loigaire orders St. Patrick and a druid to cast their sacred books into the water. The druid refuses because he considers that water is St. Patrick's god (a hint at the role of water in baptism). Then, the participants in the trial build a house half of dry wood and half of green wood. The druid, dressed in the saint's vestments, enters the green half of the house, and a boy, one of the saint's pupils, dressed in druid costume, enters the dry half of the house. The house is set alight, and the druid is burnt to death, but St.

Patrick's vestments remain whole and the boy emerges safe and well [Miurchu 2006: 373].

The origins of the theme of trial of faith can be found in the Biblical conception of the testament between God, Creator of heaven and earth, and humankind, as formulated in the Book of Exodus: "And he took the book of the covenant, and read in the audience of the people: and they said, All that the Lord hath said will we do, and be obedient" (Exodus 24:7). The testament guarantees the personal participation of the Creator in the people's lives in return for their unconditional loyalty. As S.S. Averintsev points out, "All Old Testament miracles are situated around one central miracle, which is symbolically concretized around the readiness of the eternal and unconditional to be involved in the ephemeral and fortuitous" [Averintsev 1997: 77]. Thus, the meaning of the miracle rests in the idea that God by His will can suspend the laws of nature, laws that have been established by His will [Averintsev 2006: 498], and so grant his Grace to an individual disciple, but only if he is filled with faith. The trial of faith is required to confirm the truth of the testament and in so doing confirm the truth of the faith itself. Looking at it from this point of view, the trial of faith may take different forms, from walking through the waters of the Red Sea to the Prophet's Elijah's sacrifice on Mount Carmel, the content of every form being a manifestation of divine will [Prokhorov 1995: 151].

Returning to the text of the *Life of Stefan of Perm'*, it must be remarked that the sorcerer Pam explains Stefan's power in a completely different way. For him as for all other Permians, baptized or not, Stefan is a magus like him, but stronger: "I have not learnt how to conquer fire and water, but your teacher Stefan as a child and young man learnt from his father by sorcery and spell-making how to charm fire and water, such that fire does not burn him nor water drown him" [Prokhorov 1995: 151]. The first appearance in Christian writing of the motif in which a defeated pagan accuses a saint of magic practices was in the tale of the clash between St. Peter and the Magician, but Epifanii, who never fears using quotations and reminiscences from other literary texts, does not quote the *vita* of St. Peter. For him, the pagan's reaction is no more than a manifestation of his spiritual weakness, and hence the biblical parallel can be ignored, leaving the narrative on a purely historical plane. Let us remember that Stefan's father Simeon was a "*khristoliubets muzh*" [a lover of Christ], a cleric at the Church of the Holy Mother of God in Ustiug. Evidently Simeon, hoping his son would inherit his rank and position, ensured he could read and write [Prokhorov 1995: 6]. The

possibility of the cleric Simeon being able to charm fire and water is remote indeed, but for the pagans no other explanation of Stefan's power is possible. Those facets of a theistic religion like the testament, faith and loyalty to God, and the notion of service to the One God were inconceivable even to a remarkable pagan like Pam.

Where the Christian places his trust in the Creator and His divine intercession, the pagan can only rely on the power of his magic. The nature of this power is totally different, since it is of an individual kind that permits the magus personally to affect the object to be charmed. According to Malinowski, the power of magic:

is always the power contained in the spell, for, and this is never sufficiently emphasized, the most important element in magic is the spell. The spell is that part of magic which is occult, handed over in magical filiation, known only to the practitioner. To the natives knowledge of magic means knowledge of spell, and in an analysis of any act of witchcraft it will always be found that the ritual centers round the utterance of the spell. The formula is always the core of the magical performance. [Malinowski 1954: 73].

The absence of the right magic "formula" in Pam's personal armory reduces him to a state of near panic, since, as far as he is concerned, Stefan's confidence can be only explained by his knowledge of appropriate spells, handed down to him by his magus father. Both Christian and pagan argue on the basis of radically different mental outlooks, the result of two different religious worldviews. They exist in two different semantic systems, and hence they ascribe opposite meanings to the same concept. Epifanii's point in the *vita* is that for Pam and the unbaptized Permians there is only one way to understand and accept Stefan's arguments: they have to believe. However, the adoption of faith cannot be instantaneous; it is inevitably a lengthy process, in the course of which the entire philosophical system of an ethnic group has to shift into a completely different semantic system. In fact the time gap between the conversion of Vycheгда Perm' and that of Greater Perm', two parts of the same land according to Epifanii, was a whole century. And what is more, the Christian religion and culture had to be learned and absorbed, something that also took a good deal of time. It is, therefore, hardly surprising that Pam and the newly baptized Permians should understand Stefan's power as "magic and sorcery." For them there is no other option, and they perceive the debate between the sorcerer and the saint as a magic contest between two sorcerers. This perception of Stefan's image in the culture of the people he had converted existed for a long time, until relatively recently, judging by

folk legends recorded in the early twentieth century. It cannot be said that Stefan appears as a sorcerer on behalf of the Christian God in every folk legend, but at least in the majority of them he does.

A text from 1934-35 in the archive of the Ust'-Sysol'sk Folklore Commission is particularly instructive in this respect. It represents the informant's own reflections on the topic of the conversion of the Komi people, and the appearance of the tradition of spells in Komi culture in particular. "Sorcery began to spread after Stefan of Perm' invaded, when Stefan assigned prophets to the villages and instructed them to tell the people the words of God... Therefore Stefan of Perm' brought wizards and sorcerers, who were his prophets, and designated them "*pogoshchane*" (lit. parishioners). The number of *pogoshchane* grew rapidly, and whoever was against them and criticized their bad deeds, and spoke out, these the *pogoshchane* considered sorcerers. Poor peasants, whom the *pogoshchane* had humiliated, as a form of rebuff memorized some spells. When the *pogoshchane* came to the poor peasants to preach, and the sorcerers came to curse at them, they were conjuring how to respond – and so spell casting, known as *nimkyy*, developed out of that" [Poroshkin] (2). As we see, the appearance of the spell among the Komi is linked by the informant to the name of Stefan of Perm', who fostered the first "sorcerers and magi" calling them "*pogoshchane*." The term is derived from the word "*pogost*," designating the type of Komi settlement that became characteristic after conversion. *Pogosty*, Christian settlements with churches for the baptized Komi, began to be constructed away from earlier pagan dwelling places, as a result of which nowadays there are no settlements established before the fifteenth century. The informant, who labeled the Christian *pogoshchane* sorcerers, was in fact expressing the point of view held 540 years ago by the chief Permian sorcerer Pam. It is noteworthy, that according to the informant, the notion of sorcery and the tradition of spells appeared among the Komi as a reaction to Christian preaching, perceived as Christian magic. I should add, however, that a negative evaluation of Stefan's activities like the above, is uncharacteristic of Komi folk tradition. It may well be that it appeared in the 1920-30s, facilitated by the accepted hypothesis of the day that the conversion of the Komi people by Stefan was a violent and bloody affair, since his aim was annexation of the Komi land to the Russian state. This hypothesis, stripped the aura of sanctity from Stefan's image, on the one hand, as it were, inscribing his name on the list of medieval Muscovite officials, while on the other strengthening his popular reputation as a sorcerer.

The folk legends about Stefan of Perm' can be divided into four thematic groups. The first comprises legends about the Chud', encompassing the motifs of baptism and self-burial of the Chud', the flight of the Chud', the death of a Chud' woman, and Chud' treasures. In Komi tradition those who converted came to be called Komi, while the Chud' were those who remained pagan. The second group consists of legends about Stefan (here called by the popular version of his name, Stepan) and his travels, with the corresponding motifs of floating down the river on a rock, the naming of settlements, calling the pagans "*sleporodtsy*" (congenitally blind) and "*belkoedy*" (squirrel eaters), as well as the saint's prophecies. A separate, third group comprises legends about the baptism of the inhabitants of Ust-Vym', with the motifs of the blinding of the pagans, the raising up of a mountain, and felling of the sacred birch. Finally, the fourth group comprises texts about Stepan's duel with the pagan shaman or "*tun*" in Komi. Plots are usually formed by combining motifs from the given thematic group to create various plot modifications. Stepan's missionary activities that provoke a backlash from his pagan counterparts form the core of all plots regardless of group. Since in this study the focus is on the duel between saint and sorcerer, I shall be concentrating on the fourth thematic group, with scant reference to texts from other groups. Here the main plot of the legends revolves round Stepan's meeting with the *tun*, the head of a particular locality. The duel takes the form of a series of magic actions on both sides, culminating in Stepan's victory and the death of the sorcerer. From the perspective of the pragmatics of the text, this scene can be expressed by the formula "hero – antagonist" where it is assumed that both personages possess magic powers. This means that at the structural and semantic level, the plots of the narratives about Stepan are of the same type as those about magic contests - a separate thematic group.

This kind of narrative was first described in the 1920s by Professor A.S. Sidorov, who collected and published unique material about Komi sorcerers [Sidorov 1997]. He suggested that "instead of heroic epic, the Komi developed 'sorcery epic'. Historical legends, for example those about brigands operating in the Komi lands, as well as legends about local heroes, are always less about their physical exploits than their feats of sorcery" [Sidorov 1997: 51]. These feats include what he calls "sorcery contests", which Sidorov places in a separate subsection in the book. Here he discusses the tradition of contests as well as the contemporary state of affairs, that is in the 1920s, mentioning that "tales about sorcery contests are found everywhere" [Sidorov 1997: 50]. The

plot of these tales has already been outlined, but can be elaborated here. The magic contest between the two sorcerers is known in Komi as *vynon etshas'em*. When it is clear that the spells of one are less efficacious, that contestant falls to the ground, frothing at the mouth, while the pine tree, the focus of the winner's spell, withers and dies, and if the contest takes place while out hunting, the vanquished loses his luck in the hunt. Further plot development either pursues the theme of the victor, following his later life and other exploits, or focuses on the defeated sorcerer, who, having recovered, puts the evil eye on the victor, who subsequently dies. Thus, the element that creates the plot appears to be the clash between antagonist and main hero, in which the hero's powerful reaction takes the antagonist by surprise, and he is defeated. The only positive result is that the hero's magic power is revealed, and the discovery accordingly forms the key motif that draws in additional plot elements, leading to the formation of the narrative structures of other stories. The plot of the magic contest is undoubtedly archaic, as Sidorov and other scholars have observed [Konakov 1999: 61-64]. Its primacy in relation to the plots telling of Stepan's contest with the sorcerers can be assumed, given that these and other plots exist in the modern Komi folk tradition alongside each other, without replacing or displacing each other. It may therefore be possible to trace the transition of a plot from one group of texts about the sorcerers' contest to another – about the duel between saint and magician. To look at this more closely I shall turn to texts based on the motif of the magic contest, found in both groups:

Много лет назад жил Пома (Фома). И теперь еще за деревней Удор есть поле Помавидз (луг Фомы), и гора Помакерос (Фомина гора). Ведь если бы он не жил там, так бы не назвали. Так вот Пома когда-то жил здесь. А на Вычегде тогда же оказывается жил Кортайка (Железный старец, богатырь). И вот Пома отправился на лодке на Вычегду, не знаю, с какими целями, может, для того, чтобы помериться с ним в знахарских способностях. Плывет, а Кортайка что-то варит. Пома говорит: «Сусло стой!». А Кортайка отвечает: «Лодка стой!» И сусло и лодка остановились

[Many years ago there lived a man called Poma (Foma). Even now behind the village of Udor there is a field called Pomavidz (Foma's meadow), and a mountain called Pomakeros (Foma's mountain). If he had not lived there, it wouldn't be called that. So, Poma once lived here. And at that time in Vychehda there lived Kortayka (Old man of iron, *bogatyr'*). And so Poma went by boat to Vychehda. I do not know why, maybe in order to test his magical abilities against his. He sailed by as Kortayka was brewing something up. Poma says, "Wort, stop!" Kortayka responds, "Boat, stop!" And both the wort and the boat stop] [Ankundinova 2005: 82].

This plot-forming motif is fairly widespread in Komi folklore in a version of the magic duel between two sorcerers, a boatman and a brewer, who in turn stop the brewing of the beer and the progress of the boat. The dialogue between boatman and brewer is magical in nature, and the phrases they utter evidently possess the force of magic, aimed at establishing the supremacy of one of them. It should be noted that the dialogue is conducted in Russian, while the rest of the text is in Komi, indicating the perception of Russian as a magical language. This is not just a contest of magic power, but also of the knowledge of spells, the language of magic. The result is a stalemate, since both sorcerers know the magic language, and hence their spells are equally powerful. Recognizing this, they remove the spell. The plot structure of this narrative is equivalent to the dialogue between two magicians, because the dialogue in itself represents a contest in magical power. The plot does not extend beyond the dialogue, although in some variants a stalemate may be resolved in favor of one of the sorcerers with whom the narrator sympathizes. In this case the plotline may expand slightly. Since such cases are rare, the plot of the stalemate should generally be considered fixed. As a consequence the dramatis personae may be described as brothers or friends. The fact that the heroes' names are associated with real place names and they appear to be the lords of these places further suggests that they are to be seen as equals. In Komi oral tradition Kortaika is the hero of local legends from the village of Kortkeros (note the local toponyms: Kortkeros means an "iron mount"; Kort-iag, "iron pine forest"; Kort-ty, "iron lake"; Kort-viiam, "iron strait" and consequently Kortaika means "man of iron"). The name of Foma (Poma) is also connected to local place names, as the informant above remarks.

What catches the eye in this text is that the name of Poma (Foma) appears to come from the Old Komi name, Pam or Pama [Rochev 1982]. Furthermore, the text was recorded in the village of Kniazhpogost (now the town of Iemva), which was the residence of Pam (Pan Sotnik). Other than in Epifanii's *vita* the existence of Pam is attested in entries in the Vychegoda-Vym' Chronicle for the years 1380, 1384, and 1392 [Doronin 1958: 258-60]. The entry for 1380 partially corresponds to the text of *The Tale of Stefan*, though here it forms an extended narrative [Vlasov 1996a: 21]. *The Tale* refers to the residence of Pam as "mesto imenuiema Kniazh' pogost" [a place called Kniazh' pogost] [Vlasov 1996b: 61], from which he launched attacks on the Christians. These facts would seem to indicate that the folkloric image of Poma comes from the Pam of *vita* and chronicles. In folklore field recordings, the term

pam(-n) occurs only twice: recorded first by V.P. Nalimov in the early twentieth century among the Sysol' Komi-Zyrians and then by V.V. Klimov among southern Komi-Permians in the mid-twentieth century. Nalimov notes that this term appears in combination with a personal name in the legend of *Pam Shypicha*: "according to the Zyrians, *Pam* is a name of a man with tremendous will-power who can command the natural elements and the forest folk. Apart from that, he possesses some good personal qualities; his energy and knowledge are deployed in fighting the enemies of the Zyrians" [Nalimov 1903: 120]. The title *pam* combines magic functions with military and civil power. Apart from these qualities, Pam Shypicha is also a powerful sorcerer and a brigand leader.(3) Kudym Osh (Bear), the hero of Komi-Perm' legends, also has the title of *pam* inherited from his father. He too possesses some magic powers, but he is better known as a military leader and cultural hero.

Most likely, in pre-Christian Komi class hierarchy the title *pam(-n)* designated the highest rank, that of hereditary prince. However it is not inconceivable that a *pam(-n)* combined princely with religious and magic functions. The latter would appear to have survived in various Komi charms and cumulative folktale texts, in which *pam (-n)* is an owner of a knife needed to sacrifice an animal. In the Komi etymological dictionary, the word *pan* in eighteenth-century sources means a "priest" (folkl.) or "*vladyko*" [a ruler], and derives from the root of the verb *panny* (< **paŋ-*) meaning "to found", that is to have a firm basis, possess authority, be strong [Lytkin, Guliaev 1999: 216]. For medieval Russian authors, who did not know Komi, the name *pam(-n)* sounded like the personal name of the leader of the Vym' pagans, and as such entered the chronicles. Over time, the term *pam(-n)* was lost, being replaced in the mid-fifteenth century by the borrowed Russian term *kniaz'* (prince). This occurred when Ermolai from the family of princes of Vereia was despatched by Moscow as governor of Perm' [Doronin 1958]. Thus, princely patrimonial estates were established at the same place as Pam had resided in Vym'. As a result, in folk legends the name of Stepan's enemy and leader of the pagans also acquires the name of *Kniaz'*, the ruler of Kniazhepogost. This term displaces the previous name of Pam Sotnik and becomes established in the plots of legends about Stefan of Perm' as the name of one of his opponents.

Two more plotlines in the legends about Stepan are linked to the name of *Kniaz'* [Prince]. The first leads to contamination with the legend of George and the Dragon:

Stepan Velikopermskii came and said: “Let’s build a church here”. And then Kniaz’, who lived in Kniazhpogost, killed some girls ... A girl was brought to Kniaz’ to be eaten, the last remaining girl. Every day Kniaz’ ate one girl, alive. But George the Victorious rode up on his white steed to see Kniaz’. The mother and father of the girl are sobbing because it’s their last daughter and they’ve got to hand her over to Kniaz’ to be eaten. Everyone had already handed over their daughters and just the one girl from the wealthiest family was left. And so George the Victorious arrived on his white horse and said to Kniaz’: “You’re never going to eat anyone again!” Kniaz’ toppled over, turned into a dragon and lay beneath the hooves of George’s horse. “Victorious” means that he conquers everyone. And the dragon, that means Kniaz’ who’d turned into a dragon, wrapped himself round the four legs of the horse. And George stabbed him with a bayonet, and the dragon died. And that’s how George saved the girl. She became Tsarina Aleksandra afterwards, after her marriage, she became Tsarina Aleksandra” [Limerov 2005: 170-75].

Most likely, the story as depicted on icons, which the narrator would have known, influenced the narration. The detail of the dragon entwining himself “around the horse’s four legs” while George stabs it with his “bayonet” (lance) reflects the iconic image, whereas in the *vita* St. George brings the defeated dragon to town and slays it with his sword before the people [Senderovich 2002: 40]. The substitution of Stepan Velikopermskii with George the Victorious is explicable if we bear in mind that both saints are known as fighters against paganism (the dragon commonly being seen as an allegory of paganism). Furthermore, in Christian iconography, St. George is seen as the protector of the Church, here “represented as a female figure, as well as conqueror of the devil in dragon’s guise” [Senderovich 2002: 32]. In this context, the motif of the duel between Stefan of Perm’ and Pam (Kniaz’) becomes a metaphor of the last eschatological battle between the Archangel Michael and the Antichrist as Dragon. Subsequently, this plotline evolves through the accretion of literary motifs, such as blindness overcoming attacking pagans or a birch being felled. The analysis of these motifs is, however, beyond the scope of the current article.

The second plotline constitutes a development of the plot about the sorcerers and the boiling wort:

There once lived two brothers, Kört Aika and Kniaz’. Kniaz’ lived in Kniazhpogost and Kört Aika lived in Kortkeros. However much you beat him, Kört Aika did not give in; his body was made of iron. His body was of iron; therefore the village is called Kortkeros, the Iron Mountain. People tried to catch him and even stabbed him, but no blood came out – he was iron. Kniaz’ too was very strong. Every day, he would brew a vat of *sur* [beer] and drink it. Once he was brewing some *sur* when Stepan of Perm’ came sailing down the River Emva on a large rock, right past Kniazhpogost. And he

shouted: 'Wort, stop!' And the wort stopped boiling. But Kniaz' also shouted: 'If the wort is going to stop, then Stepan must stop!' And Stepan stopped right there in the middle of the Emva. Then Kniaz' called out: 'It would seem that this one is stronger than me. I've been boiling this up for a long time, and still it hasn't turned into *sur!*' And then suddenly he plunged into the vat and emerged in the Emva. And then he went all the way to Kortkeros. And there were two of them, brothers, who often went to visit each other on foot or by boat. And Kniaz' said: 'I'll go to see my brother and ask why Stepan is a more powerful sorcerer than us. Kniaz' left, and Stepan sailed away to Ust'-Vym'. This is the story my father told me [Rochev 1984: 70-71].

This text is interesting because here instead of Poma-Pam, Stepan appears in the role of boatman, and turns out to be a more powerful sorcerer than the two brewers. Stepan does not simply take Pam's place here; rather he himself becomes Pam (cf. Pan – Ste-Pan), while Poma-Pam represents the personification of Kniaz' and is ousted to the riverside where he functions as one of the brewers. We have the magic dialogue between Stepan and Kniaz' resulting in the traditional stalemate, but the image of Stepan brings new meanings that are totally uncharacteristic of the traditional sorcery text. The plot is located in the much broader context of the theme of Christianization. This automatically places the text among the genre of legends. As a consequence, the narrative incorporates typical legendary motifs, such as the baptism of pagans or sailing on a rock to Ust'-Vym', the center of the future diocese. Within the given text, as in other texts about Stepan, these hagiographic constructs are not only symbols of Stepan's sanctity, but also form part of his magic power. Stepan's power is indisputable, and so, despite their equal knowledge of charms and magic formulae, Kniaz' has to admit defeat. Stepan moves beyond the barrier created by magic. This is an important transformational moment in the development of the narrative. A semantic shift occurs that destroys the original story line, resulting in a new narrative theme in which the magic barrier set up by the brewer is overcome by the man in the boat. In principle, as far as the plot is concerned, it is irrelevant whether Stepan is on the bank or in a boat, but folkloric tradition connects him with sailing [Limerov 2008: 191-213]. Given Stefan's image, other solutions are impossible: the plot conflict develops according to the genre criteria of legends. As a result of this, the motivations for the magic contest change – now Kniaz' as pagan sorcerer opposes Stepan, the Christian magus, with the victory of the latter interpreted as the triumph of Christianity.

There are two further observations to be made about the narrative line; it includes two additional apparently unconnected motifs: the brotherhood of Kortaika and Kniaz' and the underwater journey through the vat of beer. The motif of brotherhood arrived in this text from earlier plots, in which the protagonists opposed each other as equals. Here on the one hand it shows the pagan forces united, and on the other, underlines Stepan's power, pitted against these combined forces. The motif of pagans joining forces against Stepan is fairly common in Vym' legends about Stefan, and is also found in the hagiographic texts. In the case of the motif of the sorcerer's underwater journey, this is typical for Komi magic narratives. In the folk tradition of the Komi, sorcerers, particularly those living in the olden days, possessed the ability to rule the waters, so long distance underwater travel forms a part of their magic abilities. Transferred to the texts about Stepan, the underwater journey becomes the pagan way of traveling as opposed to the Christian one. The Christian hero travels on the surface, as illustrated by the account of the duel between Stepan and Paliaka, a sorcerer from the village of Tydor. According to the race rules, the sorcerer had to swim under water from one village to another, while Stepan had to go over the water [Limerov 2005: 176].

As Stefan of Perm' is considered the apostle of all the Komi people, it is not surprising that texts about him are found over a wide area, even including regions he never visited. Apart from the Vym' and Vycheгда river regions where he did go, legends about him are also found in the Upper Pechora, Upper Vycheгда, on the river Mezen', and even around the river Kama. As a result, the number of opponents whom Stepan is obliged to fight increases. The legend about Meleika recorded by P. G. Doronin in 1929 illustrates this point well. It was recorded in the River Mezen' area, and in it Stepan's opponent is a sorcerer called Meleika (lit. the bogatyr from Melei) from the Mezen' village of Melent'evo (in Komi: Melei):

Stepan is floating down the river Mozyn (Komi for Mezen') and sees from a distance that on the bank of the river the *tun* Meleika is preparing wort for beer. Stepan shouts out: "Wort, stop; wort, do not flow!" In response Meleika says to Stepan who is coming closer to the bank: "If the wort stops, then boat, you stop as well!" And Meleika's wort and Stepan's boat stopped at the same time. The spells were equally powerful. Then Stepan said, "Wort, run!" "If the wort runs, then your boat will too," said Meleika. And the wort flowed and the boat moved forward. Again, the spells were equal. When Stepan was about to land, Meleika blocked his way with the following words: "I know why you're coming. Leave us alone, go back home. You know my strength;

you can't stand up against me." "I'm not afraid of you," said Stepan and began to tie up at the bank. Then Meleika began to scream like an animal, and to hurl arrows at Stepan and throw all kinds of things at him. Stepan cast a spell on his attacker's weapons and Meleika's arrows and blows became harmless. He warned his companions not to let Meleika get to the river, as all his magic power came from water. Seeing that his way to the river was blocked, Meleika rushed to his vat of hot wort and pronounced a spell over it, so that it cooled down. Then he jumped into the vat uttering a spell as he did: "My wort, my wort of grain, help me against my enemies!" The wort started to seethe and foam and to overflow, flooding the whole area. Stepan's companions were afraid and went to return to the boat, while Meleika laughed a nasty malicious laugh as they retreated. Stepan said, "It's too early to celebrate, oh sorcerer," and placed a counter spell on the fire and the wort: "Fire, blaze, and wort, boil!" Stepan's spell worked. Meleika sprang from the vat scalded and ran off to the river shouting. Stepan's companions again blocked his way and started to hack at him with their axes. Meleika fell to the ground but was not dead yet. They went on striking him until Meleika himself suggested cutting off the lower part of his body to ease his suffering. Meleika was buried at that place and his grave laid with stones. [Limerov 2005: 333]

It should be noted that in the traditional plotline which features the motif of the boiling wort, the highlight of the magic contest is the dialogue between boatman and brewer, which establishes the magic powers of each. In fact, the essence of the contest lies precisely in the dialogue. After exchanging magical formulae and establishing each other's strength, the opponents go their own way and the story ends. The topic of conversion, associated with the image of Stepan, requires the plot to develop and conclude with the saint's mandatory victory, or else the conversion of the enemy. However, the semantic framework of the magic dialogue is too constraining for this, and so tradition seeks additional motivations for Stepan's victory and finds them in the development of the traditional plot through the addition of elements like a demonstration of the opponent's magic powers and their neutralization by the saint, or the demonization of the antagonist, or else the motif of the sorcerer's difficult death.

In this way, the narrative structure of the legend becomes more complex, the plot of the narrative expanding through the addition of reciprocal magical actions by the characters. These in effect also become a manifestation of the magic contest. As a result, the plot structure of the narrative emerges as a combination of two major plot elements, dialogue and magic contest, united by the theme of the trial of magic powers (*etshas'em*). Formally that scheme is similar to the scheme of the apologetic plot highlighted above, which consists of dialogue and ordeal,

united by trial of faith. The difference between the two is that the trials of faith and of magic power are not equal. If the first theme presumes the idea of personal faith and God's help, the second depends on the existence of personal magic qualities and skills. Because of this, Pam and St. Stefan of Perm' see the meaning of the ordeal differently; Stefan considers it a judgment from God, whom he serves devotedly; while for Pam it is a magic contest and it is the absence in his personal fund of skills and knowledge of charms for fire and water that forces him to accept failure.

It is, therefore, impossible to talk a "semantic field shared by Russian and Komi cultures, in which the depicted confrontation looks completely credible" [Kotylev 2008: 124]. While not doubting the historical likelihood of the events described by Epifanii, I would note, however, that the semantic fields of Russian Christian culture and the pagan culture of the Komi were utterly different at that time, leading both monk and sorcerer to evaluate the events differently. From the point of view of Stefan, his enemy Pam was a vassal of God like himself, albeit a disloyal one, while for Pam Stefan was a sorcerer, but more powerful [Uliashev 1997: 8]. As has been seen, folklore supports Pam's point of view and portrays Stefan as a sorcerer and conjurer of the elements. The folkloric Stepan competes with other sorcerers, and so, paradoxically, the motif of the magic challenge enters Christian legend.

Further development of this plot results in the loss of the traditional dialogue, apparently because it hampered the narrative dynamics. As the magic significance of the formulae ceased to be understood by narrators, the dialogue very often comes simply to be seen as the starting point for the plot. New variants have appeared in the narrative cycle about the Kortkeros sorcerer Kortaika alongside texts with the dialogue between boatman and brewer. In these, the boatman is stopped by a chain stretched across the river, as a short example shows: "Kort-Aika wouldn't let anyone through. He ate people. He only let those people through, who had given him a lot of pelts of fur-bearing animals. And his river was blocked. Only Stefan of Perm' could get through. And after that people began to celebrate St. Stefan's Day. That's how the village Kortkeros came into being" [Uotila 1995: 330].

In the more developed versions of this narrative, the sorcerer blocks the river with an iron chain, which Stepan has to destroy before sailing on. This magic chain could only be broken by stronger magic. Being an object of exceptional magical strength, the cross is what Stepan uses. He hits the chain with the cross and it breaks. The same motif is found in

legends about the Pechora sorcerer Kyska [Limerov 2005:186]. In the absence of magical dialogue the plot is realized according to a different principle. The plot-making motif here is the journey by water, undertaken by Stepan for missionary purposes. The concept of an accidental meeting, characteristic for texts with magical dialogue, is eliminated. Here, by contrast, Stepan has deliberately set off on a journey to meet the pagan sorcerer and, the story focuses on a detailed description of the magical contest. The story also has additional motifs from sorcery epic: the sorcerer turns into a giant pike and a bear; he swims underwater (Paliatika); he goes fishing in a place where he will not miss Stepan; he has a difficult death, and only Stepan knows how to alleviate his death pangs. In the case of Meleika, Stepan recommends that his belt be cut; he indicates how Kyska, whom a spell protects, should be hit with an axe (by swinging it away from the body) and how to shoot an arrow at Oshlapei in a special way. One may also add the motif whereby the place where a sorcerer dies becomes a toponym: the village of Oshlap'e is founded where Oshlapei died; Kortkeros where Kört Aika fell, while Stepan builds a church and the Troitse-Pechorskii Monastery where Kyska died.

The dialogue between boatman and brewer does, however, survive in the general fund of plot motifs and is used by tradition in a number of legends about sorcerers' trials [Paniukov 2009: 127-32]. Outside the theme of trials this motif does not have a function, as recorded variants from the neighboring Vologda region reveal a deep deformation of the meaning:

There exists a popular belief that certain peasants, who are not sorcerers and healers, wanting to do some harm to someone, when they go into a house while beer is being brewed can 'stop the wort' just by thrice uttering the phrase 'Boat stop and wort stop'. People are convinced that after these words the wort stops flowing from the vat. And if somebody wants to stop the process of oil being pressed from seeds, then he says: 'Boat stop and oil stop!' three times. They also assert that after these words have been uttered three times, oil will stop coming out of the seeds [*Russkie krest'iane* 2008: 43].(4)

The conversion of the Komi to Christianity in the late fourteenth century marked the beginning of a dialogue between Russian Christian written and Komi pagan oral traditions. For the Russians, participation in the dialogue meant the Christian salvation of a pagan people and the political control of Muscovy over the vast territories of Perm'. For the Permians, engagement in dialogue was very probably also politically

motivated. Leaving aside the ecclesiastical and political aspects, it should be admitted that dialogue was only made possible thanks to the development of an appropriate conceptual apparatus, enabling the participants to understand each other. The initial impetus was created by Stefan of Perm's translations into Permian of the basic tenets and beliefs of Christianity. The complexity of Stefan's mission lay not just in the accuracy of his translated texts, but more that the translation required the creation of semantic equivalents for Christian images in a non-Christian tradition that was in no way prepared for them. For their part, in order to accept and adopt these new concepts, the Permians devised their own semantic equivalents by drawing on their own cultural symbolism. The key image signifying the point of contact between the two traditions was that of Stefan of Perm'. Russian tradition expressed its own understanding and acceptance of Perm' in his *vita*, which is both a biography of Stefan and the history of his voyage to Perm'. Over a long period the image created by the creative genius of Epifanii Premudryi consolidated its hold on the Permians and their land, but the main thing is that this image was accepted by Muscovite Rus'. For its part, Permian tradition expresses its own understanding of Stefan's image and activities in a series of folkloric texts about Christianization. In this interpretation Russia accepts Perm'. Thus, a dialogue between Christian Russia and pagan Perm' became possible, and Russia made a first step into Eurasia.

The integration of Stefan's image into the pagan system of Komi culture could not have happened all at once, and should instead be construed as a long process of assimilation and appropriation of a new semantic field. As a result the system underwent such radical reconfiguration that its initial parameters were changed. The image of Stefan fulfilled the function of attractor, the semantic field of which modeled a new systemic organisation of culture, attracting at its base the semantic structures of both Russian Orthodoxy and the old pagan system. At the same time, the reconfigured system itself as it progressed altered the image of Stefan in accordance with its needs. The semantic range of this image is quite wide and includes both meanings associated with general Russian conceptions of saints and sanctity plus certain hagiographic traits of St. Stefan, as well as those associated with the remnants of pagan belief. As a result, in different texts Stefan acts as a saint or a sorcerer, and sometimes both at once. The choice of one or other meaning is determined by the preferences of local tradition, but it should, however, be remarked that it is the magic dominant of Stefan's image that prevails. The basic concepts were recoded, such that Stefan's

saintly ascesis was assimilated by pagans as a demonstration of great magic power; thus a new semantic equivalent of Stefan was created that corresponded to the semantic norms of tradition. Accordingly, the key scenes representing the clash between the two religions are described in the literary and folk traditions by different means. On the one hand, we have a Socratic dialogue between Stefan and Pam, complicated by the motif of the trial of faith, but on the other, plots about magic contests where Stepan takes part in tests of sorcery. Moreover, many of the legends in the Stefan cycle exist freely in the broad narrative tradition of the Komi, conventionally defined as “magic epic”, meaning the whole set of folk narrative texts about sorcerers, including magic contests.

NOTES

1 What is more, the boundary between literary fact and historical reality may be highly unstable. In the mid-seventeenth century, a close associate of the archpriest Avvakum summoned his opponent (a supporter of Patriarch Nikon) to a trial by fire. That may have been just a rhetorical flourish on Avvakum’s part, but all too soon his followers, the Old Believers, were to choose self-immolation, seeing it as a test of their faith.

2 All texts in Komi have been translated by the author.

3 N. A. Krinichnaia also notes the identification of *pans* with brigands [Krinichnaia 1987: 107].

4 As described by the peasant Papa Sobanin from the village Monastyrikhi, Berezhnoslobodskaia volost’, Totemskii uезд. The author is grateful to O.V. Belova for pointing out this source.

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