Perception of Disability in the Communicative Practice of Archaic Societies

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Abstract — **The article is devoted to the study of the influence of social norms on the social perception of persons with disabilities. Attitudes toward people who are different from others in traditional culture are closely connected with the notion of the need to maintain stability in society, which is the basis for the reproduction of customs and texts. In this case, any way out of the normal and familiar is seen as a risk to the community. Traditional cultures offer a variety of ways to adapt an antinorm: from its destruction to assimilation, which seems to be determined by the common notions of space and time, as well as the usual ways of forming social identity. In addition, within each cultural community, the issue of determining the boundaries between the norm and the antinorm is uniquely solved.**

Keywords — traditional culture, inclusion, ritual, disability, social transformations

I. INTRODUCTION

The processes of socialization and integration are associated with the concept of norms and inclusion. Obviously, the concept of norms has undergone significant changes depending on the territory and epoch. In this context, people with disabilities (people who differ from others in some ways) require special attention. Disability studies emphasizes that disability is a social construction [1]. This scholarship argues that physical difference, impairment, or functional limitation is not disability.

Instead, disability results from the constraints that the dominant culture consciously or unconsciously places upon people who physically, intellectually, or psychologically differ from some arbitrarily defined 'normal'. In short, biology is not destiny for people with disabilities any more than it is for women, racial and ethnic minorities, or any other group subordinated or marginalised in western cultures [2].

Until recently, the main research in the field of disability concerned the issues of integration of persons with disabilities into society, the implementation of special disability policies [3]. Currently, disability is discussed in the context of identity formation, perceived as a special case of "otherness" along with race, and gender [4].

Also, studies of disability in various countries, mostly non-European, are currently popular. In these works, the emphasis is on the correct, from the point of view of the European author, the interpretation of social policy in relation to persons with disabilities and changes in social policy [5]. There are few works devoted to the study of disability in other temporary and religious cultures, the main ones are devoted to the study of Islam [6].

For traditional society the concept of the norm turns out to be closely related to the concept of stability and one's own security. Any exit from the limits of normality and familiarity is seen as a threat. Traditional cultures offer ample opportunities for adaptation and assimilation of antinorm, due to socio-cultural factors. In this context, people with disabilities require special attention.

It is noteworthy that in traditional culture, in contrast to modern, for disability is characterized rather, not isolation, but inclusion. Disability is, rather, a natural part of human diversity— something that should be valued and celebrated, rather than pitied and ultimately "cured" [7].

II. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study is based on the structural-semiotician approach, which is based on K. Levi-Strauss and V. Ya. Propp's theoretical and practical constructions, which has been further developed in the works of number of national and international researchers. This methodology allows analyzing one philosophical (worldview) phenomenon through another through identification patterns of formation and variability of their structure in ritual and folklore texts, which, firstly, ensure their stability, and secondly, their variability; i.e. to consider cultural tradition in the light of ritual practice and everyday behavioral models. And it is not directly about the culture of a particular ethnic community or a group of such communities, but about the system of ideas about it, based on the ideological constants inherent in the humanity as a biological species.

As a consequence, comparative methodology plays a big role in this study. They are primarily a comparative mythological, a comparative cultural and a historical typological methods that allow to compare similar variants of traditional world perception with each other and its implementation in relevant texts, and thus to recreate the missing components of the world picture of this culture. But the comparative methodology should undoubtedly be used with extreme caution, and while attracting data from other ethnic traditions the principle of rationality of typological comparisons, developed by A. N. Veselovsky, is a great help.

III. ARCHAIC SOCIETY AND DISABLED

Archaic societies handle the problem of the physical integrity of their members, the boundaries and prospects for incorporating them into various aspects of social activity, in other words, inclusion with great attention and caution.

Traditional, that is, first of all, the pre-writing, culture exists in conditions of extreme underdevelopment of the material segment of being, which leads it to the need to be extremely careful about everything, that is to some extent related to the mechanisms of survival. Despite the fact that these mechanisms are quite diverse (but not infinitely diverse due to the impossibility of fixing and transmitting arbitrarily a wealth of information in the absence of writing), in general they are implemented at two fundamental levels - physical and informational.

The first, physical, level is determined by both the behavioral effectiveness of each individual member of the archaic society, and by general group efficiency, that is, by a tight combination of vital tactics and strategy. The second level is linked with the actualization and implementation of theoretical models, which are the fundamental principles of the survival of society and are concentrated in the form of tradition as information coming from the past.

Consequently, the effectiveness of any archaic collective, that is, its ability to survive, is determined by the harmony of the combination of these mechanisms. This, in turn, depends, among other things, on how well the physical and informational aspects of the general cultural paradigm are distributed among the members of society, that is, on the conditional division of society into "practitioners" and "theorists". And if the task of the former is simple enough and consists in the implementation of the fundamental concepts embodied in the tradition and connected with the general principles of survival, then the latter should adapt these concepts to the ever-changing real conditions as competently as possible.

The functionality of "practitioners" depends almost exclusively on the ability to actively act within the framework of specified circumstances, that is, on their physical abilities. And if the basic parameters of this functionality are provided by the mechanism of natural selection - strength, agility, endurance, etc., then ultimately the adequacy of the "practitioner" to the objective is determined by the presence / absence of restrictions of a more local order, which hypothetically limit him in solving this problem. In other words, everything depends on his physical abilities, but not immanently inherent, since traditional societies usually reinforce the mechanism of natural selection by various means of correction of reality, first of all by getting rid of the physically weak and injured at an early age, and from, so to speak, well-received. Those physical limitations that occur in a person not initially, but in the process of his vital activity, that is, various kinds of injuries.

The functionality of the "theorists" does not depend on their physical data, but grows exponentially in accordance with the amount of personal experience they have accumulated, since it is they who, ultimately, convert it into actual social knowledge, matching this experience with the information broadcasted by tradition. The behavioral models and schemes that the archaic society operates with do not come in its entirety from the past, but are the result of the adaptation of sacred traditional information to immediate reality. And the more experience is accumulated and reflected by the "theorist", the more effective the behavioral strategies of the whole society are.

It can be argued that, basically, traditional society is divided into two main categories - strong and experienced, and the latter determined the course of action of the former. This is indeed the case, and it is confirmed by the extensive ethnographic and folklore material, where the pattern of steady increase in social status and significance for the collective in accordance with age changes, directly related to the growth in the quantity and quality of personal experience, is clearly visible.

To sum up, the "practitioners" are young and healthy members of society, while the "theorists" are old and experienced; and it is obvious which group performs management functions and dominates, and which one subordinates.

IV. CULTURE AND BODY IN ARCHAIC SOCIETY

But the realization of an active practical function is obviously linked with inevitable risks that can lead to partial or complete loss of "work capacity" when a person loses the possibility to be implemented as a "practitioner", but age parameters still do not allow him to move naturally into the group of "theorists". Having been injured in a war or a hunt, or as a result of an accident, he becomes marginalized and "hangs" between two main social positions.

Characteristically, in the Modern Age such people are crowded out to the social periphery, since they lose their usefulness to society. But traditional culture cannot afford such profligacy as the experience itself gained by such a character has significant cultural value.

Consequently, there is a need for a mechanism of a kind of archaic inclusion which allowed disabled people to find their unconditional place in society, so that they, on the one hand, weren't in the way of the physically healthy people, but did not claim the high social status of the old elders. Their place is somewhere in the middle, but it, like any stable social position, should be clearly defined and have an understandable and functional mechanism of theoretical and practical reproduction.

Since traditional culture in this semantic context faces a typologically identical corpus of problems, these mechanisms should manifest themselves in equally typologically identical forms and have a universal and absolute character. The latter is especially important due to the fact that tradition functions as a single-force form of constructing of reality, forming a single and basic set of meanings, based on specific techniques of the semiotisation of the ambient reality. Consequently, these mechanisms should be recorded in the main texts of traditional culture, primarily in ritual and folklore ones, and their presence will be the main argument in favor of the concept considered in this study.

The first area, in which the paradigm of social positioning of physically impaired people in an archaic society is realized, is connected with their withdrawal beyond the limits of

significant practical activities. A disabled person cannot fully carry out socially significant work (and the archaic society does not know any other work), consequently, he should be removed from it.

It is appropriate to recall here that only and exclusively the "occasional disabled people", those who were injured in the process of life activity are meant, since traditional culture has a stable mechanism for neutralizing "nature-disabled people", those who did not become such, but were born. The example is the Spartan practice of killing physically handicapped children, which has become paradigmatic.

To understand how ideas about the place of physical health in the traditional sociocultural model are formed and formulated, it is necessary to turn to the structure of the ritual of initiation, more or less common for all archaic societies. Almost all known cultures follow the typologically single path, using the general scheme of "depriving a previous status - acquiring a subsequent one". As M. Eliade writes, "initiation means the set of rites and verbal instructions, the purpose of which is a radical change in the religious and social status of the initiate. In philosophical terms initiation is equivalent to an ontological change of the existential state" [8 pp. 12-13].

Moreover, this scheme fits into the complex of traditional ideas about the structure of time, which is rightly pointed out by E. Leach: "being in each of the statuses makes the period of social time (which has social duration), but the rite itself, which marks the transition to a new status (reaching puberty, wedding, healing, funeral), is an interval of social timelessness" [9 p.45], which, in turn, is perceived as death. Hence the steady motive of the death of the participants of the initiation, both in the structure of the ritual itself and in the texts which accompany it. The broadest ethnographic materials which belong to a wide variety of cultures and confirms the direct connection between the initiation and the temporary death of neophytes; for example, in many Australian tribes, mothers mourn the initiates, as the dead mourn [8 p.38] is at the researchers' disposal. That is, the process of acquiring a new status by a member of society is perceived as a kind of rhythm of losses and acquisitions, which is "predominantly spiral in nature, and acquisitions ultimately not only eliminate losses, but have the character of absolute enrichment of space and the community" [10 p. 239].

Such an approach includes very successfully an initiation complex into the general traditional dying-rebirth scheme (cosmological concepts), and reproduces the archaic spatial-temporal structure (the role of the Other World and the initial time as the place and the moment of the ritual of initiation) at the new, epic level. The loss of social status by a number of members of the collective is regarded by society as an invasion of social Chaos, and the successful undergo of the rite, which enriches society with new full members, is regarded as a triumph of social Cosmos. It should be remembered that the initiation rite performed a very important socializing function in a traditional society: it "consolidated the normative information system obtained in life, structuralized the individual's social position" [11, p. 244].

It is important that in most well-known scenario schemes of initiation rituals the important component is the motive of

dismembering the body of a neophyte with its subsequent "reassembly" in a new body. Proper undergo of the rite thus implies the acquisition and a new physical integrity, in addition to a new social status. The neophyte became different, but above all, full-fledged, having kept all the characteristics of a regular human body. It was this integrity that gave a person the right to claim the appropriate social position and certain rights, since they were automatically supported by certain duties that a person could fulfill without any difficulty.

In the case of physical injury, especially related to the deprivation of some part of the body, the situation was assessed not only and not so much from the point of view of ordinary pragmatics, but in the context of a general set of ideas about the world in general and about the place of a person in it. And the main concept, which determines the whole complex of ideas of the archaic society about ontological reality, can be characterized as "harmony".

The main place in all ritual and folklore texts that have come to us is given to varying degrees to harmony of the traditional universe. The archaic man, unlike the modern one, did not strive to change life for the better; the main purpose of his existence was not to allow any changes, to support the established status quo by all means, which was contributed by the general orientation of the traditional culture towards stability and invariance of all its key components.

Consequently, physical integrity was perceived as a manifestation of global harmony ("a healthy mind is in a healthy body"). But this harmony concerned not only the principles of perception of objective reality, but also a more complex system of relationships between the various components of being, where our visible world, with necessity, was included, and so the invisible world, the Other.

The basic concept characterizing the specifics of the Other World is its separation from the world of people; they belong to different categories of space, and "the specificity of the depiction of specific embodiments of the other world consists in focusing on its isolation" [12 p. 410]. But this remoteness and isolation only actualize the ideas about the stability of relations between the worlds on the basis of the principle of balance, that is, harmony. The very possibility for by a neophyte to gain a new status together with a new body is due to the idea of exchange, where the new changes to the old, being left (sacrificed) to the Other world.

The same, according to the traditional picture of the world, is true for parts of the human body. Being lost in this world, they are sent to the Other world, but within the framework of the hermetic model, they necessarily find their doppelganger here, invisible, but, nevertheless, quite functional. In the ritual practice of different nations, first of all in initiation one, the motives of blindness, dumbness and immobility are very popular as an alternative to the idea of blindness, dumbness and inability to move as primary signs of death common in archaic cultures [13 p. 106], or, which has a special meaning in the context of initiation rituals, temporary death. The concept of one-leggedness and one-handedness of the dead and, more broadly, representatives of the Other World also applies to this: "the second half of them remains in the other world and therefore remains inaccessible for perception of those living in

the world" [14 p. 23]. That is, the disabled person, according to the archaic worldview, is not just a handicapped person, but a composite being, partially possessing elements and, consequently, signs of a different world reality.

As a result, it is possible to speak about the presence of the idea of some specific overcompensation included in the general ritual rhythm of losses and acquisitions in the traditional culture. In society there is a complex of extremely ambiguous attitudes towards physically impaired people of traditional society, which are, on the one hand, under-people, automatically losing a number of rights and opportunities inherent in a person, and on the other hand, super-people, acquiring new, inaccessible to ordinary people , opportunities and rights. This ambivalence clearly and consistently manifests itself in archaic communicative schemes, significantly lowering the traditional status of people with disabilities, blocking the generally accepted social elevator, but compensating for this by opening a whole variety of new opportunities and prospects that are inaccessible to "ordinary" people.

The logic of the deterioration of conditions for career growth in the framework of the traditional model is particularly evident in the figures of those who occupy a high, that is, leading social position. This is determined primarily by the fact that, from the point of view of the traditional axiological paradigm, they embody the whole team as a set of sacred and profane aspects. We are talking about all sorts of rulers, leaders, etc. In fact, such an intellectual model is the result of the evolution of ideas about the sacredness of power itself, within the framework of which there is a steady increase in the "humaneness" of the public leader.

V. DISABLED IN ARCHAIC MYTHOLOGY

Archaic mythology gives us the image of a totem ancestor, by virtue of its nature endowed with basic mediative characteristics, as a ruler. This image, apparently, formed the basis of ideas about the king-priest as an ideal figure, embodying the fullness of the dominant political spectrum (Egyptian pharaohs, etc.). Characteristically, the replica of this image that appeared in the Middle Ages in the form of a figure of the Muslim caliph was extremely unviable, and, although this title existed until the twentieth century, the period of its real functionality was very limited.

Classical mythological texts offer an image of political leadership as a result of a certain compromise: the right to power is the result of a more mediated interaction between worlds, although it is still determined by the presence of a connection with the Other world. The kings of classical mythology are the descendants of gods (Greek hero kings, Kauravas, etc.). But this connection is no longer only a source of legitimation of political power, but also as a reason for certain anxieties and doubts. In this context, it is interesting to consider the Trojan War as a kind of cleansing of the political elite from divine blood, as a result of which the hero kings either retain power only on the periphery of civilization (Odysseus) or go beyond its borders (Aeneas). Alexander of Macedon's attempt to reanimate this tradition predictably did not give any long-term results.

Heroic-epic texts already at the regular level part images of the king and the hero, creating specific dichotomous systems, the contradictions within which act as one of the springs of the plot-forming conflict. But the very presence of such inverse pairs (Hercules and Eurystheus, Ilya of Murom and Prince Vladimir, Guillaume of Orange and King Louis) tells about the fundamental dilution of heroism as conceptualized interaction with the Otherworld, and political leadership as a purely social activity connected exclusively with the world of people.

The same ideas, but on a different theoretical and practical level, are also observed in relation to physically handicapped people. The absence of any limb (the most common type of injury) or some other part of the body, especially the paired one (eye, ear, etc.), indicates the appearance of a kind of double organ in a person that "binds" him to the Other World and serves as a channel of communication between worlds. As a result, a person is functionally transformed into an analogue of Baba-Yaga, whose bone leg (in fact, one-legged, but with the visualization of the mythology considered) gives her the opportunity to perform fundamental mediation functions [15]. It is obvious that such an "agent of the Other World" can in no way fulfill the range of duties associated with the representation on a permanent basis of the entire culture as a whole.

So, in Irish mythology it is right to say that the ruler, who lost his arm in battle, automatically loses his rights to the throne: "for he could not be Nuada the king since he lost his arm" [16 p. 353]. The semiotic series also includes the idea of the sufficiency of the injury of his political opponent (for example, blindness) in the framework of the struggle for power. And even in the era when such ideas are already deeply archaic, in the Middle Ages, their relics periodically manifest themselves in real political processes - the fate of the princes Vasilko Terebovlsky and Vasily the Blind serves as a good example.

But, as mentioned above, it would be unnecessarily wasteful for the traditional culture to ignore the experience of people who were injured. In addition, the ideas that served as the basis for the desocialization of such characters, contributed to the formation of an alternative sociocultural strategy for them. This is connected, first of all, with the idea of the Other World as a source of knowledge, skills and abilities, inaccessible to the world of people. Consequently, the one who is able to build any consistent relationship with the other world, receives a whole set of advantages that are inaccessible to ordinary people. Most consistently, this concept was embodied in the image of the trickster, but the number of considerations, which characterize this image, is also valid for physically handicapped members of society.

First of all, it concerns the general philosophical scheme, when any physical impairment is presented as a marker of regular interaction with the Other World. Consequently, any kind of activity, one way or another based on some kind of supernatural knowledge, implies a physical disability associated with it. Blacksmiths, the masters of fire, whose work is perceived by their tribesmen as mysterious and not completely human can be an example of such an attitude in an archaic society. The forge is always located on the periphery of the settlement, and this is connected not only with the pragmatic fear of fire from the blacksmith's forge. The blacksmith is a

typical mediator, which determines its social functionality, far surpassing production tasks. So, judging by a number of folklore and ethnographic texts, blacksmiths and their attributes could play a significant role in wedding rituals [17 pp. 60-63]. Characteristically, a lot of mythological and epic blacksmiths were marked by foot injuries (Greek Hephaestus, Scandinavian Völundr), which can in no way be directly related to their professional activity and, consequently, reflects some other complex of ideas.

It is worth saying that some key heroes of the Greek tradition, personifying the idea of the unity of the world of people and the kingdom of Hades, Achilles and Odysseus, are also lame. In addition, problems with legs are experienced by the horses of a number of deities, especially those whose responsibilities include the mediation function - the horse of the Scandinavian Odin's octopus, and Wastiardji of Ossetian mythology, St. George's invariant rides a three-legged horse.

Even more revealing in the archaic society is the role of the witch, a life support specialist, whose work is based on supernatural knowledge. In fact, the image and function of any witch is a projection of the already mentioned Baba Yaga, a universal mediator between the world of people and the Other world. The sphere of a witch's professional activity is knowledge, on the basis of which she "corrects" nature, by which the natural course of things and events is meant. Traditional ideas of harmony suggest treating the usual dynamics of losses and acquisitions as a norm.

The state of health, the relations between the sexes, etc., are components of a general ontological normalized state, which was originally set, everything develops within the framework of a originally defined plan that was formed in the cosmogonic era; this approach will later be completed in religious concepts of divine predestination. Any intervention in this is fraught with consequences, since it leads to disruption of harmony with unpredictable consequences. That is, any attempt to change life "for the better" is, by definition, a risky business, because a person, due to his informational limitations, is not able to take into account all the nuances, and it may end badly. The best is the enemy of the good; this principle is fundamental to the tradition.

But changes are necessary; it is they that set the mobility and plasticity of the culture, ensuring its development in spite of the stabilization focus of all traditional mechanisms. But the progression activity, despite its necessity, from the point of these mechanisms cannot be approved by the society, and moreover, it is considered extremely dangerous. Consequently, it is imposed on the social and cultural periphery and turns out to be the sphere of competence of various marginal characters. In mythological texts, the trickster becomes its carrier, and at a lower level - sorcerers and witches. That is, the witch is a Progressor, but, taking into account traditional axiology, the Progressor is outlawed.

Well, since the source and the resource of a witch's activity is supernatural knowledge, she also needs an appropriate set of tools that provides her with access to this knowledge on a regular basis. That is, a stable relationship with the Other World, which is established, as discussed above, at the expense of physical (or mental, but this is a topic for another conversation) inferiority. And here the image of Baba Yaga appears again as a role model. A good witch is one-eyed or blind, badger-legged, without the use of one arm, etc. There is a lot of ethnographic material which shows how young girls, forced to play the role of witches for various reasons, had to imitate not only age, but also some physical impairment.

Special attention in traditional texts is given to a vision loss. The basic set of relevant ideas can be found in the ritual blindness of the neophytes, which, along with stillness and invisibility, perform the task of visualizing the idea of their temporary death, even outside the ritual culture blind characters play a significant role. First of all, this concerns the witches, already considered, but not only. The area where a blind man can quite successfully be realized is prophecies. The Blind man, according to traditional logic, receives eyes in the Otherworld and sees the invisible. And since the Other World is, in essence, an invariant of mythological Chaos, that is, the entire sum of ontological potentials, the future is presented there as clearly as the past and the present, and can be seen with the presence of appropriate optics, which a blind person possesses by definition. The example of the blind divinator Tiresias of the Greek tradition is one of the brightest, but by no means the only one. It is curious that the "blind clairvoyants" of the newest history, from Vanga to the woman Nina, who is actively advertised on the Internet today, are being updated completely within the framework of the traditional paradigm.

Another area of realization of the blind is creativity, and it is so for the same reason. Inspiration in archaic societies was considered as a projection of the supernatural, divine will, not dependent on man, and even nowadays talent is still defined as the "gift of God". With this, the medieval concept of impersonality, according to which the hand of the master is directed by God, and man is no more than his instrument, is directly connected. But due to technical reasons, a blind man cannot work in the visual arts, and their sphere of competence in this area is limited mainly to music and poetry, which, within the framework of tradition, were considered to be different facets of a single semantic row.

Homer is blind, Russian guslars and Ukrainian bandura players are blind too, and in general, it seems that blindness is included in the set of professional characteristics of an archaic poet and musician. The fact that this is not accidental is confirmed by many traditional texts. So, in the ancient Chinese book "Guoyu" (*Discourses of the States*), in the section "Speeches of the Zhou Kingdom," where ways to maintain stability in the state are discussed, it is stated that "The Son of Heaven, being engaged in public affairs, orders everyone: from the rulers of dominions and high dignitaries to the officials of three ranks - to bring verses, to musicians - to bring songs, to historiographers - to bring books, to blind people without pupils - to sing poems, to blind people who have kept pupils - to recite "[18 p. 24]. It should be noted here that the terms "musician" and "blind" in the ancient Chinese language are denoted by the same hieroglyph - "gu" [19]. In another place of this source there is a very illustrative thought which reflects the idea of the role of music in the sacred model of the universe: "I am not a musician and not a great astrologer - how can I know the will of Heaven?" [18, p. 29]. That is, music and poetry in archaic societies were put on the same level as supernatural, ritual

activity, and it was not by chance that not only mythological, but also heroic-epic texts, poetic by definition, were performed in various socially significant situations [20, p. 220]

The poet, like the soothsayer, needs to see the Other World, because, according to traditional logic, creativity in the modern sense is fundamentally impossible, everything has already been created and formulated in a cosmogonic era, and all that remains is to find, take and tell people. And for this, as well as for the other behavioral patterns considered in this article, the skill of mediation, which is ensured by the physical damage which corresponds to the task, is required.

VI. CONCLUSION

The logic of communication skills and experience of people of archaic societies who have received physical injuries and are unable to perform normal duties, of course, is not limited to the considered options. Traditional culture has always amazed researchers with a variety of strategies for solving various problems, providing our ancestors with completely unique and, periodically, paradoxical possibilities for surviving and continuing themselves in time.

As for the considered aspect of the archaic culture, it is important to note that it makes sense to regard social positioning of physical impairment within the framework of tradition, first of all, from the point of view of the need to compensate for lost opportunities by others, acquired in a "mirror" way as a result of injury. Here the rhythm of losses and acquisitions, customary to archaic, is again manifested when deprivation of something does not turn into a "one way ticket", as it was realized later on in the Modern Age, but becomes a source of new acquisitions and victories. And this is accomplished by transferring the standard behavioral scheme to another sphere through attracting the almost unlimited potential of ideas about the capabilities and resources of such a significant for tradition component of the reality as the Other World.

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