

Abstract

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This thesis deals with spells as a part of Finnish folklore. It depicts the circumstances of the spells' genesis, as well as their structural features and different purposes of their use. It is considered that most spells were created during the era of late paganism and early Christianity. This is true not only of Finland but also of Europe in general. The thesis also analyses the role of the shaman as the spiritual leader of Finnish people living in the era before the spells' creation and thereafter analyses the role of the shaman's successor: the *tietäjä*, the charmer who created spells and used them to help people in his community. So the *tietäjä* used his spells for the same purpose as his predecessor, the shaman, used trance states, which he entered via drumming, chanting and dancing. In the trance state, he talked to animal spirits and ancestors' spirits and received the answers for his tribe from them.

The thesis continues with a list of Finnish pagan gods and other spiritual beings with descriptions of their tasks and with examples of spells in which they are asked for help. However, the cores of this thesis are two different typologies of spells. The first one was defined by Finnish literary scientist Kai Laitinen and the other by Scottish ethnographer John Abercromby. The final chapter of the thesis aims to answer the question which elements of magical thinking and behaviour has remained in modern European and American society. The final chapter also deals with neoshamanism and neopaganism which are phenomena that try to continue in the legacy of pre-Christian spiritual traditions and to bring them up to date.