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The Origin of the Expression *tuda i doroga!* and Slav Folk Beliefs about Two Ways of Dying

The expression *tuda (komu) i doroga* (lit. ‘in that direction for X [lies] indeed the road’; x ‘it serves X right’, ‘X had it coming’) which is found in Ukrainian and Russian has not yet been the subject of diachronic study in its own right. Nonetheless, the phraseme has certain features which set it apart from large numbers of set expressions and which are manifested at the functional-semantic level. These features make *tuda (komu) i doroga* an interesting subject for ethno-linguistic analysis.

First of all, it should be noted that the phrase is not used to designate a situation, but either to evaluate one, or to express the speaker’s attitude to a particular event. Its second notable feature is its grammatical completeness. *Tuda (komu) i doroga* has the modal and tense properties of a complete clause. These functional features serve to distinguish it from the vast majority of idioms, which can typically be used to designate some fragment of reality (often combining the designation and the evaluation of a situation), and which are not complete predications, but rather one of the constituents of the clause. Nonetheless, the meaning of the phraseme is

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typically idiomatic: the meanings of its individual components are not autonomous, but are fused into the meaning of the unit as a whole. Dictionary entries illustrate this point clearly. The four-volume dictionary of Russian gives the following definition: ‘he got what he deserved, there’s no cause for complaint’ [Evgenyeva 1985–88: 1: 432]. The idea of ‘relocation in space’ contained in the element *doroga* (‘road, path, way’) has been lost in the semantics of the expression, whilst the ideas of punishment and a negative attitude to the person being punished have been acquired.¹ The reinterpretation of the original image underlying the expression *tuda i doroga* is a point of similarity with idioms.

Unlike sayings and utterances which incorporate idioms, the expression *tuda (komu) i doroga* has a clearly circumscribed communicative purpose: it is used as a reaction to a piece of news. For this reason, it is typically found in dialogue:

Those who were at the centre of the circle formed by such people expressed their considered opinion using words uttered in response to the death of another great Russian poet, Lermontov. The Tsar’s brother, Grand Prince Mikhail Pavlovich: ‘Serves him right’ (Tuda emu i doroga); Nicholas I: ‘He got what he deserved’ (Sobake – sobachya smert, lit. ‘For a dog, a dog’s death’). [...] This is the full extent of the summary moral portrait painted by that gigantic social pyramid which the poet challenged in the person of D’Anthus. Veresaev, Pushkin v zhizni [Pushkin in Life].²

It is clear from the context that one of the participants in the act of communication is using the expression *tuda emu i doroga* as a reaction to what the other participant has told him. As a rule, the content of the expression refers to the death of a third person. Its pragmatic purpose is to convey the speaker’s negative attitude to the person under discussion. In the example cited, it is to all intents and purposes echoed by the formula *Sobake – sobachya smert*, in which the idea of evaluation finds more explicit expression.

By using the expression *tuda i doroga*, a speaker attains two illocutionary goals at once. Firstly, he expresses his approval of what has happened or of what might happen to someone. Secondly, he expresses his strong disapproval of that person’s actions. The phrase is used in relation to the death of a person, or to a situation which may in some sense be equated with death (captivity, imprisonment,

¹ Cf. the use of the word *doroga* in the saying *Gde trevoga, tuda kazaku i doroga* (lit. ‘Where there’s trouble, that’s where the Cossack’s road lies’), where the meaning of relocation in space is preserved.

² V. Veresaev, *Pushkin v zhizni* [Pushkin in Life], a collection of biographical anecdotes about the poet, is the most famous source of information about Pushkin’s life in the Russian language [Editor].

trial, discovery of crimes, severe punishment, torture etc.). Thus, the purpose of the phrase is to express two opinions at the same time: a negative opinion of the actions of a certain person, and a positive one of the situation in which this person finds himself. The phrase *tak emu i nado* (lit. 'thus to him indeed it was necessary'), though close to *tuda emu i doroga* in sense, lacks its expressiveness.

These features of the phrase *tuda (komu) i doroga* can be explained if an account can be given of its original content and the nature of its semantico-functional development.

The expression enters into the following paradigmatic relationships. Firstly, it belongs to a group of etiquette formulas which are fixed in form and content, and which are used in specific communicative situations. The phrase *tuda i doroga* is equivalent to other etiquette formulas which express a reaction to news of a person's death. Some of the expressions in use today convey a negative opinion of the dead man, others a positive one. Examples of the latter include: *Pust zemlya emu budet pukhom* (lit. 'May the earth be (eider)down for him'); *Tsarstvo emu nebesnoe* (lit. 'The Kingdom of Heaven for him'); *Upokoi, Gospodi, ego dushu* (lit. 'Lay his soul to rest, o Lord'); *Vechnaya pamyat* (lit. 'Eternal remembrance'); *Dai Bog legko v zemle lezhat, v ochi Khrista vidat* (lit. 'God grant that he may lie comfortably in the earth and may see Christ face to face'); *Upokoi, Gospodi, dushenku, primi, zemlya, kostochki!* (lit. 'Lay his dear soul to rest, o Lord; accept, o earth, his dear bones!'); *Mir prakhu, kostyam upokoi!* (lit. 'Peace to his remains, repose to his bones!') [For the last three see Dal 1997: 1: 239].

These expressions are used in circumstances in which the speaker wishes to convey an attitude to the dead man which is positive and which accords with the attitude held by other members of the community. Christian etiquette demanded that a person cross himself when saying them. When using formulas like *tuda emu i doroga* or the more expressive *Sobake — sobachya smert; Zhil sobakoi, okolel psom* (lit. 'He lived like a dog and died like a mangy cur' [Dal 1997: 1: 235]; *Chtob i ne vstal!* (lit. 'May he not rise up!'), it was normal to spit in order to ward off possible evil influences from the dead man.

It is important to note that in these cases death is treated as punishment for sins committed during a person's lifetime, and that the deeds which led to this punishment, or the person himself, are roundly condemned.

A second group of set expressions in which *tuda (komu) i doroga* can be included consists of various collocations with the element *doroga*. Discussion here will be restricted to those expressions which, like *tuda (komu) i doroga*, are full clauses and which have a clearly

defined pragmatic function. Examples include expressions of the type *skater'yu doroga* (lit. 'like a table-cloth the road'; 'good riddance!'), its Ukrainian variant *polotnom doroga, idi (stupai) svoei dorogoi*, the Ukrainian *A shchto ti na dobru put' ne ziishov!* (lit. 'May you never find a good road!'; [Nomis 1993: № 3693], *A bodai ti dorogi ne stalo!* (lit. 'May you lose your way! [Franko 1908: 2: 33], *Zapala bi si za nim doroga!* (lit. 'May his road disappear behind him!') [Franko 1908: 2: 36] and others. These expressions, like incantations, are held to have special, magic powers. They are used both in interactions between people and in contacts with supernatural and inimical forces.

According to Dobrovolsky, the formula *idi (stupai) svoei dorogoi* (lit. 'Go your own way') was used in Belarus as a means of warding off wolves. 'When people encountered a wolf or wolves, they used to say, "Hello, lads! You go your way and I'll go mine!" or, "Well, go your own way"' [Dobrovolsky 1901: 135-6]. The same formula was used in Slobozhanshchino in the eastern Ukraine in the nineteenth century to drive away a witch who had assumed the form of an animal. When they saw the creature in their way, they said, 'Go away, heathen; I'll go my way and you go yours' [Ivanov 1991: 463]. In the Vologda region of Russia, the expression *Tebe doroga, nam drugaya* (lit. 'For you [there is] one way, for us another') is used to protect people from whirlwinds, an embodiment of harmful supernatural forces. When a strong wind gets up, people shout, 'Whirlwind, whirlwind, you've got one way, we've got another!' [Matveev 2002: 134]. Thus, verbal formulas containing the element *doroga* can be used in contexts where a person is interacting with representatives of another world. The purpose of such formulas is evidently to reinforce the boundaries between humans and evil forces and in this way to protect man from danger.

According to the data collected by the Ukrainian ethnographer Gnatyuk, a magic formula with the element *doroga* could also be used to find the way. When someone is led astray in a forest or another unfamiliar place, he has to bend over, look back between his legs and say, '*Meni tudi doroga!*' (lit. 'For me in that direction [is] the road!') [Gnatyuk 1904: 196]. The key to finding the right path would seem to be turning the body. This action can be interpreted as the means by which a person who has fallen victim to an evil force escapes from the spatial structure of the other world. That said, it is possible that the magic formula itself has some bearing on the situation, and that when it is uttered it destroys the boundary confining someone who has lost his way.

In encounters with creatures of a demonic nature, special significance is attached to verbal formulas which make reference to *ikh doroga* ('their way'), i.e. to that part of space which is designated for

evil forces, and to *svoya doroga* ('one's own way'), i.e. the way or path of mankind. It is characteristic of Slav folk culture that each path is divided into two: the right-hand side, which humans take, and the left-hand side, along which wild animals and evil spirits move [SD: 2: 128]. Naturally, a person who finds himself in the part of the road meant for demonic creatures is exposing himself to danger. Consider the story recorded in Karelia: '*A hunter had set up camp for the night on a pathway, and someone touched his shoulder and said, 'Get off the path/out of the way' (dvinsya s dorogoi)*' [Krinichnaya 1993: 25]. This reflects the idea that in a forest there are paths used by a *leshii*.¹ If a man crosses one of these paths, he can fall ill, go mad or even die [For further details see Zhuikova 2003].

If they remain within their own space, i.e. 'go their own way', demonic creatures and wild animals cannot do a man any harm. Beliefs about the interaction between a bear and a herd of cattle grazing in woodland which have been recorded in modern times in the Kargopol region of Archangel province reflect this idea:

A man comes up to a shepherd and says, 'There's a bear there! There's a bear where the cows are!' The shepherd replies, 'It's his business where he goes, let him go, he's going his own way.' And predators never touched the shepherd's cattle [FP].

By using a formula of the sort *idi svoei dorogoi* or *tebe doroga, nam drugaya*, a person effectively confirms that he is not encroaching upon space belonging to demonic creatures, and at the same time demands in return that his path is left clear and safe.

Folk wisdom makes a clear distinction between different types of paths or roads, then: there are good ones which are favourable to mankind, and dangerous, hostile ones belonging to others. In folk culture, a 'bad' road is understood to be an alien place where it is dangerous for a man to be. Beliefs about demonic creatures are associated with these roads and with the places to which they lead, as, for example, in the western Ukrainian (Boikovo) expression *U verkhi ti doroga!* (lit. 'For you the road [leads to] the mountain-tops!'). Franko notes: 'This is said to an evil, importunate person and means, 'Get lost, go to the mountain- and hilltops, where evil spirits are sent' [Franko 1901: 1: 148]. Asocial behaviour which did not correspond to accepted norms must, therefore, have been taken to indicate that a person inhabited alien space, was walking along 'bad' roads.

From the linguistic point of view, the expression *tuda (komu) i doroga* has two important features. It contains the locative component *tuda* ('to there'), a typical deictic word which has a different meaning in

¹ I.e. a forest spirit [Editor].

every act of communication. In current usage of the phrase, the word *tuda* does not correspond to a location, but rather to a situation named in or implied by the utterance; in actual fact, the word has now lost its locative meaning. When the phrase originated, however, the word *tuda* clearly referred to a definite part of space (real or imaginary), and it is important to discover precisely which fragment of reality this was in order to establish the initial sense of the phraseme.

The second linguistic issue concerns the meaning of the word *doroga*. A vast number of magic formulas contain this element, some of which have been given above. In such formulas, the word is used first and foremost in a spatial sense. Even in the many set expressions where the road is understood in an axiological sense as being good or bad, the spatial component is still evident in its semantics. Cf. *A bodai ti dorogi ne stalo!* (see above); *Idi v poganu dorogu!* (lit. 'Go along a bad road!'); *Psya bi ti doroga bula!* (lit. 'May your road be a dog's road!'). It is argued here that the word *doroga* in the expression *tuda (komu) i doroga* is to be taken more broadly to indicate some general direction in the sequence of events that embodies the journey of life. It is well known that the conceptual sphere of relocation in space (a journey along a road) has been used since ancient times as a concrete means of representing man's earthly existence and his fate. This conceptualization finds numerous linguistic reflections. For bearers of traditional culture, a person's journey through life from birth to death was completely determined, preordained by higher powers. The word *doroga* in the expression *tuda (komu) i doroga* might in fact be a person's fate, that to which he was born. This conclusion is supported by variants in which the addition of the component *byla* ('was') to the phrase *tuda i doroga* is attested. Commenting on the Ukrainian equivalent *tudi iomu i doroga bula*, Franko gives, 'He's done for, it was only right that that should happen to him, considering his character'¹ [Franko 1901: 1: 40]. Important evidence for an older interpretation of the expression is to be found in the work of Pisemsky:

'There, a fine law he's come up with! Even Fedor Gavrilych has been condemned, for no reason whatsoever, just for his meekness, he's been condemned to exile, — fine laws they've come up with, lad!'

'He deserved it, he had it coming (tuda emu i doroga byla)', said Yakov Ivanov, as though talking to himself.

'God knows who had that coming (komu tuda doroga-to shla; lit. 'to

¹ Franko uses the word *vdacha*, which means not only 'character' or 'habits', but also 'nature', i.e. innate, God-given attributes. Cf. *Taku vdachu iomu Bog dav; Taka vzhе vdacha sobacha* ('Such a nature was given to him by God'; 'Such is his swinish (lit. dog's) nature') [Grinchenko 1908–09: 4: 318].

whom in that direction the road went')', retorted *Grachikha* [Pisemsky, *Staraya barynya*].¹

The first speaker regards the event as a manifestation of injustice, as the arbitrary exercising of power on the part of the authorities, whereas the second speaker is inclined to see it as the manifestation of predestination, of man's fate. This example shows that the expressions *tuda emu i doroga byla, komu tuda doroga shla* relate to the journey through life, to fate, which can be known in advance by God alone. A man can but resign himself to obeying God's will. Clearly, this view of fate was typical for bearers of traditional culture, for whom not only the sequence of events in life's journey, but also the time and manner of death were preordained. All cultures attach very great significance to death.

Originally, then, the expression *tuda i doroga (byla)* reflected awareness of the predetermination of life and death, and for this reason its meaning was extremely important for a bearer of traditional culture. However, in order to establish its initial meaning and understand its functional and pragmatic features, examples of situations in which it could be used must be found. Determining the referent of the deictic *tuda* will help in this task. Put another way, it is necessary to find out in what sort of situation the expression *tuda i doroga* was originally used as a complete utterance and what pragmatic purpose it fulfilled.

In this connection, it seems appropriate to mention the distinction between two types of death, a distinction typical of folk culture, which was first described by Zelenin in *Supernatural Deaths and Mermaids* [Zelenin 1995: 39-73]. In addition, interesting data on attitudes to suicides in Transcarpathia in the first half of the twentieth century were collected by Potushnyak, and were published in the article 'Suicides in Folk Belief' [Potyushnyak 1941] and elsewhere.

The Transcarpathian Ukrainians believe that those who commit suicide differ from evil spirits and creatures with two spirits in that their souls 'are not accepted anywhere' and they are tormented, never finding peace. For this reason, victims of suicide are very hostile to the living and try to harm them. The living endeavour to ward off their dangerous influence by various means, including hanging them up by the legs, carrying them round the town or village on a pitchfork, or running them through with an aspen stake. The body of a suicide victim is buried in an inaccessible place or at a roadside. Those who hang themselves are thought to be particularly

¹ I.e. the story *Staraya barynya* (The Old Lady) by the well-known mid-nineteenth-century realist writer Aleksei Pisemsky (1820-1881) [Editor].

dangerous. If possible, their bodies are buried in exactly the same spot where they killed themselves, 'so that they don't get chance to do any harm'. First of all, a deep pit is dug, and then the rope is cut and the body lowered into it. These graves are not marked with crosses, but only with a stake. Everyone who walks past the burial place of a suicide victim has to throw a clod of earth, a stick or a stone at it, and anyone who fails to perform this ritual will come under the influence of the unclean dead man and lose his way. According to the beliefs of the Transcarpathian Ukrainians, after death suicides remain in the place where they died or were buried and harm people until the end of their life on earth (i.e. until they have lived out on earth the time allotted to them). As well as ravines and roadsides, the boundary between villages – called the *khotar* – served as a burial place for those not at peace. Such people were usually consigned to the space belonging to 'the other', to unclean places inhabited by various demonological creatures.

The burial of the ritually unclean must clearly have been accompanied by the pronouncement of some sort of protective magic formula. The purpose of the formula was to neutralize the evil directed against the living by the dead man, to protect the living from possible acts of vengeance, to stop the deceased from walking after death, and so on. However, it is possible that the text had another function as well. Its purpose may have been to 'legitimize' the decision to bury the deceased in the manner reserved for the ritually unclean and dangerous. In this case, the use of a magic formula effectively served to exclude the dead man from the category of *roditeli* (lit. 'parents'), i.e. the dead who were ritually clean, and to include him in the category of the unclean, for whom there were special places and forms of burial. It was evidently particularly important to make this classification in doubtful cases, where there were grounds for putting the deceased in either category. Although in any given instance the decision as to whether a dead man was clean or unclean would be made by members of the social group, they could reinforce their decision by invoking predestination, fate, divine will. Precisely this sense was conveyed by the expression *tuda (komu) i doroga*; it was understood to mean that a person had travelled and completed his life's journey in the way that he was meant to, that such was the will of higher powers. In uttering the expression *tuda (komu) i doroga*, the speaker effectively refuses to accept responsibility for considering the deceased unclean and in this way he protects himself from vengeance. Thus the formula *tuda (komu) i doroga* served two purposes at once.

The deictic component *tuda* can be taken to refer to the actual places where the ritually unclean were buried; it corresponded to the destination to which the corpse was finally relocated (a marsh, ravine, pit etc.). The word *tuda* can also be understood in a more

abstract sense to designate hell, since in folk belief the souls of the unclean, and especially the souls of those who have committed suicide, are thought to suffer there eternally. It is interesting to note that the expression *tuda (komu) i doroga* can be accompanied by other phrases in which evil spirits or hell are mentioned explicitly. In Nomis's collection of sayings, the expression *K chortu pomalenku!* (lit. '[Go] slowly/quietly to the devil!') is given as an equivalent of *Tudi i doroga!* [Nomis 1993: № 9543]. Alongside *tuda i doroga* in Dal is *Davno pora i s golovoi tuda* [lit. 'For a long time it has been time [for him to go] with his head there, to that place', i.e. for him to go to the other side, to hell] [Dal 1997: 1: 191].

To sum up, the expression *tuda i doroga* reflects the beliefs held by bearers of traditional culture about the predetermination of life's journey and a man's fate. It is argued here that the expression arose because of the distinction between two types of death and two classes of the deceased. The original function of the expression was apparently to sanction the treatment of a dead man as unclean and to justify his exclusion from the category of *roditeli*. Errors in classification could entail unpleasant consequences, in the same way as burying an unclean person in a cemetery could. Since any dead man posed a danger to the living, the expression *tuda (komu) i doroga* was also apotropaic.

The interpretation proposed here helps to explain why the phrase *tuda (komu) i doroga* became firmly associated with 'unrighteous' death – with death seen as punishment for sins and therefore not worthy of pity or compassion from members of the community. In modern linguistic consciousness it has been reinterpreted, its original functions have been forgotten, and its components have lost their literal meaning. Now the phrase *tuda (komu) i doroga* serves to express a negative attitude to a person to whom something dangerous or unfavourable has happened or might happen. This usage is undoubtedly a reflex of a time in which people had an irrational fear of the unclean dead and tried to isolate themselves from them and to defend themselves from their pernicious influence.

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Abbreviations

- SD — *Slavyanskije drevnosti: Etnolingvisticheskii slovar* [The Early Slav World: An Ethno-linguistic Dictionary] Vol. 2. Moscow, 1995..
- FP — Folklor i postfolklor. Arkhiv. Kargopolskii raion, Arkhangelskaya oblast [Folklore and Post-Folklore. An Archive. Kargopol Region, Archangel Province]. www.rutenia.ru/laborfolklore.archiv.

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