

**Heikki Paasonen and a Pan-European motif  
in Mordvin folk poetry**

One of the themes occurring in the popular poetry of many nations is that of the building that cannot be built without divine intervention or without a propitiatory sacrifice. It is almost always an important civil-military construction, but there is no shortage of religious buildings: legends in this regard are known from every part of Europe, from Italy to Hungary, from the British Isles to Russia. H. Paasonen (Mikkeli 1865 – Helsinki 1919) is a scholar who, taking advantage of his four study trips to central Russia, provided us with more than one example that was widespread also among the Mordvinians. The best known one refers to the construction of the fortified city of Kazan, which recalls, in the Hungarian context, the elevation of the Déva castle; but what interests us more are the vicissitudes of the construction of a church which connect the Mordvin story to a legend from Trentino, with the atrocious difference that in the Volga region the Christian divinity demands even a human victim. We are quoting here the longest Erzya variant recorded by Paasonen in the original language and in translation.

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