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Religion of Dolgans, Nganasans, Nenets and Enets

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This study examines the peculiarities of traditional religious beliefs of indigenous peoples of the Krasnoyarsk Krai — Dolgans, Nganasans, Nenets and Enets. The authors use comparative historical and historiographical methods, as well as rely on the results of field research conducted by employees of the Department of Cultural Studies at the Humanitarian Institute of Siberian Federal University in the territory of compact residence of these peoples in Krasnoyarsk Krai from 2010 to 2018.

The study provides an overview of the main features of the traditional religious beliefs of each of the designated indigenous minorities with the definition of their current state.

The results of the study make it possible to determine the general and specific features characteristic of the religious beliefs of Dolgans, Nganasans, Nenets and Enets who live in the Krasnoyarsk Krai, both in their traditional form and in their present state.

Keywords: Religion of Indigenous Minorities of the North and Siberia, Krasnoyarsk Krai, the Dolgans, the Nganasans, the Nenets, the Enets.

Research area: culturology.

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Introduction

The original religion of the indigenous peoples of Nenets, Enets, Nganasans and Dolgans has been in the focus of attention of scientists for a long time. The first information about the views of Nganasans and Samoyed peoples is found among travelers in the 18th century, namely P.S. Pallas, I. Lepekhina, I.G. Georgi. In the

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19th century this information is supplemented with more detailed descriptions of the Nganasan shamanism in the works of A.F. Middendorf, A.A. Mordvinov and P.I. Tretyakov. A systematic study describing the rites and beliefs of Nganasans begins in the 1920s and 1930s in the works of A.A. Popov. In the 1960s-70s, Yu.B. Simchenko, G.N. Gracheva, L.A. Fainberg, G.M. Afanasieva, B.O. Dolgikh renewed the study. The important sources include film materials that began to be recorded in the 1970s (cinematographic recordings of the shamanic rituals of Tubyaku and Denim Kosterkin from the Ngamtusuo clan). In the 1990–2010s, N.V. Pluzhnikov, L. Lamber, O.E. Dobzhanskaya continued the research. The key sources were the records of the Nganasan folklore texts. The studies of the Enets and Nenets cultures often accompany each other because of the proximity of ethnic groups. B.O. Dolgikh, V.I. Vasiliev, V.P. Krivonogov were actively engaged in studying the diversity of Enets. The large-scale study of the Nenets culture belongs to L. V. Khomich, and today the study of the ethnos is continued by A.A. Zinchenko, I.S. Karabulatova, L.A. Lar, A.S. Khudyaev. The information about the religious beliefs of Dolgans are contained in the works of P.I. Tretyakov and A.F. Middendorf, as well as in the reports of the Yenisei Diocese. One of the first Soviet scientists to describe the characteristics of Dolgan beliefs is A.A. Popov. Currently, the book *Folklore of Dolgans*, the author-compiler of which is P.E. Efremov (Efremov, 2000), is of great importance in studying the Dolgan worldview. Brief information about some aspects of the Dolgan religion is contained in T. Zhrebina's reference book (Zhrebina, 2009). A detailed description of the prohibitions among modern Dolgans is given in the article of L.D. Bettu (Bettu, 2011). The sacred topography of Dolgans is described by N.K. Danilova. A.I. Savvinov presents the most extensively various aspects of the culture of the people in his writings, including information about religion (Savvinov, 2012, 2005).

The discussion of the community and characteristics of religious beliefs and practices of various indigenous peoples has a long history. Thus, in the ethnographic studies of the 19th — the beginning of the 20th century, the phenomenon of shamanism is regarded as a way of subjugation of some members of the community by others (Bogoraz, 1910; Zelenin, 2004; Ksenophontov, 1992). The current state of shamanism is studied most systematically by the staff of the IEA RAS (Kharitonova, 2004, 2006; Hoppal, 1996; Weinstein, 1995). Special attention is paid to the social essence of shamanism (Smolyak, 1991). These studies are focused on the description of shamanism as universal for a number of ethnic communities, worldview and practices (Koptseva, 2013). At the same time, there is a polarity of views of the nature and function of modern

shamanism in modern science as a product of the colonial approach (Khakkaraynen, 2007) and as a component of the nation's tradition capable of reproducing an ethnos (Kharitonova, 2006).

Methods

The methodological basis of this research includes a comparative analysis, historical comparative and chronological methods, a method of historical and historiographical description.

The research is based on studying existing articles and monographs describing the religions of the indigenous peoples of the North and Siberia, in particular Dolgans, Nganasans, Nenets and Enets. The authors also rely on the results of field research conducted by employees of the Department of Cultural Studies at the Humanitarian Institute of Siberian Federal University in the areas that were densely populated by Dolgans, Nganasans, Nenets and Enets in the Krasnoyarsk Territory from 2010 to 2018.

Religious Beliefs of Dolgans

The religion of Dolgans, like the ethnos itself, was formed at the intersection of the cultures of several peoples: Yakuts, Russians, Evenks. In this regard, it seems relevant to compile a general description of all elements of the religious culture of the people, based on the existing research on this topic.

Due to the fact that the ethnic group is quite young, and the first mention of it dates back to the second half of the 19th century, there are relatively few studies devoted to the religious beliefs of Dolgans. Furthermore, it is interesting that, as a rule, in various sources they are described as peculiar conductors of the Orthodox religion and culture among the peoples living in the north. This is evidenced, for example, by records from the report of the Yenisei Diocese of 1894, "In the tents of Dolgans and Tunguses," as f. Suslov writes, "I always found icons hidden in a separate drawer and a clean bag, candles and incense remained there as well. Starting a prayer, the inhabitants of the tent take out the icons, light the candles and burn incense. The sign of the cross is believed correctly, and sacred objects are treated with reverence. When they bring my box with the accessories of the divine service into the room," as f. Suslov writes, "the one who brings in all the time warns others to cross themselves" (Yeniseyskii yeparkhial'nyy uchilishchnyi, 1914: 22).

The facts presented in the official report, differed from the data of scientists. For example, A.I. Savvinov notes the following, "In general, they, as local baptized

aborigines, were the most northern conductors of Orthodoxy and Russian culture in Taimyr” (Savvinov, 2005: 49), here he refers to A.F. Middendorf, who wrote the following, “Although in Russian they knew no more than the Tunguses of the Norilsk Lake, they adhered more strictly to their old dresses, traditions and customs. All of them also firmly withstood the temptation to be baptized without excluding even the foremen Mani and Tyltsyakhan,” (Middendorf, 1878: 692). A.F. Middendorf also has the following remark about the records compiled by Tretyakov, “The Dolgans took Christian baptism more readily, so everyone considers them Christians, whereas the Tungus are hardly half Christians. However, the significance of this information is explained by the fact that Christians cannot do without shamans. Tretyakov adds that the natives enjoy full religious freedom, but only those who take baptism are exempt from taxes for three years” (Middendorf, 1878: 690). And again, “According to the unanimous recall of the best travelers, Dolgans have no idea about the Christian religion, although half of the natives are assigned to it; they rarely even hold the names that are given to them at baptism. Their religion represents a mixture of Christian and pagan concepts” (Middendorf, 1878: 697).

However, over time, especially in the Soviet period, scientists are focusing on the more ancient layers of the Dolgan culture, including, for example, animistic views; besides, scholars study shamanism, which is characteristic of the peoples of the region.

The proximity of the religious beliefs of Dolgans and Yakuts is noted in the writings of A.A. Popov, T. Zhrebina, N.K. Danilova. The synthetic character of the Dolgan religion can be traced in its different aspects: in the concepts of the creation and structure of the world, belief in ghosts, shamanistic cults, customs and prohibitions.

In the article *The Epic World and the Sacred Topography of Dolgans* N.K. Danilova indicates that there are three main versions about the origin of the world, namely, related to the culture of Yakuts, transmitting a Christian worldview, and storing traces of totemic beliefs (Danilova, 2017).

The description of the world creation can be presented in the following variants: all scientists agree that water is the fundamental principle of being in the Dolgan mythology. A similar idea is characteristic of many archaic cosmogonies of the peoples of the north, including the myths about the creation of the world, contained in the epic of the Yakut people — olonokho (Evsyukov, 1988). In the Dolgan legends and fairy tales, the difference in variations lies only in the fact who acts as a demiurge — gods from the Yakut pantheon of Aiyy toyon or even more archaic characters, such as the loon bird. It is also interesting how Christian motifs and characters are woven

into the fabric of these stories: Jesus Christ appears in legends when it comes to the creation after the global flood; or the Virgin Mary helps the birds in the creation of the world.

The texts presented in the book *Folklore of Dolgans* (Efremov, 2000) allow us to compose a picture of the structure of the world. Thus, various legends indicate that there are three worlds: Upper, Middle and Lower. Accordingly, the spirits of aiyy, which are good to people, live in the upper world; man lives in the middle world; evil spirits of abaasy, which can greatly harm a person, exist in the lower world.

Dolgans are also characterized by the belief in an animal progenitor, which is mentioned, for example, in the legend *The Son of an Atalamia Horse is a Hero* (Efremov, 2000: 51). According to this legend, a horse was sent from the Upper World to the Middle World. It took a wife from aiyy people, who were residents of the spirit world. Their union gave birth to two mares, which in turn became the progenitors of two bunches of people.

According to the legend, the hero born from this mare became the one who founded the bunch of people in the Middle World. The researchers note in this story the influence of the culture of the Turkic-Mongolian peoples, since the close relationship between man and horse is emphasized in the mythology of the steppe peoples.

T. Zhrebina notes that in addition to the spirits, which had a less defined appearance, there are also disembodied spirits — ichchi, in connection with which the veneration of sacred objects called Saytaans arose. Those could be either bizarre objects, different from a number of their own kind, or those in which ichchi were enclosed by the actions of shaman. The belief in the patronage of such spirits is an echo of the most ancient animistic views, associated with the need to establish a close relationship between man and the world, forming a sense of security.

The most important figure in the religious life of Dolgans is the shaman, because it is he who is able to communicate with the spirit world; people could save themselves from the wiles of evil abaasy with the shaman's help. A. A. Popov notes the following features of the shamans: the name oiun itself indicates the nature of the relationship with the spirits, carried out through a kind of play, the ability to cheat and deceive; not only men, but also women could be shamans, however, in both cases they did not become shamans by their own choice, but received their abilities by virtue of belonging to a certain genus. Besides, there is also no information that someone became a shaman due to congenital or acquired physical defects. The researcher also draws attention to the fact that the shaman cult of Dolgans has significantly

changed due to the influence of the Yakut and Christian cultures. Nevertheless, the information about the hierarchy of shamans existing in antiquity, which was built on the basis of the shaman's abilities to benefit people, has been preserved. Over time, everything was greatly simplified; they began to define weak, medium and famous shamans. A. A. Popov also writes that the communication of shamans with spirits and deities could be done in three ways: *algys* (prayer, spell), dreaming and ritualism, which was the most complex and important way, resembling a theatrical act (Popov, 1981).

L. D. Bettu describes in detail the prohibitions that persist among modern Dolgans, based on the results of the expedition to the Taimyr Peninsula in 2009. According to the researcher's observations, the prohibitions may concern various aspects of life: fishing activities for men, domestic issues for women and children, interactions with the animal world, as well as with sacred places. The violation of the prohibition entails anything that is a sin; any wrong action should soon turn into sad consequences, often not only for the one who sinned, but for their whole family. It is interesting that the prohibitions included those ones which banned the presence near the graves of Nganasans, which L. D. Bettu associates with the times when plague and smallpox raged among Dolgans' closest neighbors, and the threat of extinction was later transformed into conduct of behaviour of this kind.

The traces of ancient beliefs are preserved in the culture of Dolgans to this day. A similar example is given in V. N. Davydov's article *The Dolgans of Eastern Taimyr: Field Research Experience in the Novorybnoe and Syndassko Settlements in 2015*, "The inhabitants of Novorybnoe believe that it's impossible to hunt swans: It's not good to shoot swans. If people shoot, life goes bad. Trouble comes after this bird. A tundra hunter shot and wounded it. Then his children began to die. Another one shot, and something went wrong with him as well" (Davydov, 2015: 79).

However, today the younger generation in rare cases may explain the significance of this or that ban, the cult of shamans has practically disappeared, the representatives of the indigenous people themselves are increasingly positioning themselves as adherents of Orthodox Christianity. In particular, this is evidenced by the fact that the translation of the Gospel into the Dolgan language by A. A. Barbolina, whose illustrated edition was released with the support of the Norilsk Diocese, is a fairly vivid and significant event. The illustrations were also created by the Dolgan artist E. Porotov in collaboration with Y. Porotova. The presentation of these books was held in the mandatory presence of representatives of the Orthodox Church.

Religious views of Nganasans

Nganasans live in the villages of the Taimyr Dolgan-Nenets Municipal District of the Krasnoyarsk Territory. The population of Nganasans in the settlements of the Krasnoyarsk Territory is about 700 people according to the official website of the local self-government bodies of the Taimyr Dolgan-Nenets Municipal District for 2019. Nganasans have communities that continue to lead a nomadic way of life, other communities practice sedentary living, being involved in traditional hunting and fishing industries.

The basis of religious beliefs of Nganasans is shamanism, which is associated with animism, field worship and the cult of mothers of nature.

Scientific ideas about the Nganasan religious beliefs were formed on the basis of field research data, during which scientists witnessed shaman rituals, had the opportunity to personally interact with shamans and indigenous informants. Thus, key observations, analytical generalizations and sketches of rituals and ritual objects can be found in the monographs of A. A. Popov (personal contact with Taimyr shamans Sereptie Yaroskin and Semyuen Ngomdzha, a Vadeev shaman Cherie, an Avam shaman Dykhadie Kosterkin) and G. N. Gracheva, who are the leading researchers in this field. In addition, in order to reconstruct the Nganasan religious beliefs, scholars appealed to recordings of epic tales (sitabs) and Nganasan stories, as well as video recordings of the rites of one of the last hereditary Nganasan shamans Demnime Kosterkin of the 1970s. Despite the presence of a significant number of information sources, the religious views of Nganasans are difficult to systematically analyze, in particular, because the Nganasan culture was unwritten for a long time and existed only in the oral tradition, in which completely different cosmogonic ideas of the people, various pantheons of “deities” and their hierarchy, etc. were recorded.

Based on the existing scientific research, it is possible to present key concepts of the Nganasan religion.

The Nganasan cult of the mothers of nature is based on the deification of natural forces. Supernatural and supreme beings are called “nguo” by Nganasans. The most significant nguos of Nganasans are Mother Earth, Mother Sun, and Mother Moon. Mother Earth is responsible for the birth of all life on earth, in particular, man, animals, plants; after death, it is Mother Earth who takes man back; Mother Sun provides the energy of life and growth to all living beings. Mother Moon largely duplicates the functions of Mother Sun, its functions are less clearly seen in religious beliefs, but are associated with the phenomena of nightlife and with the patronage of the feminine.

In general, the number of nguos of Nganasans is not exhausted by the listed ones and can be quite wide — there, the most significant nguos in the Nganasan religion are Mother Tree, Mother Fire and Mother Water, each of which performs its own special functions and is revered in various shamanistic rituals and delights of sacrifice. Many researchers of Nganasan religious beliefs point out an important fact: Nganasans can translate the word “nguo” into Russian both as “god” and “devil”, that is, in their opinion both good and evil beginnings are syncretically merged in deities.

The material embodiment of the nguo or divine patron is koika. Each Nganasan should have a koika; it can be a wooden idol or some natural element (stone, knot, etc.) that can be fed (to heat deer fat on burning coals for their koika), asking for protection in affairs, hunting, for protection from diseases. The researchers note that Nganasans cannot get rid of their koika, because they can cause their anger otherwise, which will lead to misfortunes in life or death, therefore, when moving to another camp, they respectfully carry a koika on separate sledges (the motive of respect for wooden idols and punishments for violating this rule are also often found in Nganasan folklore texts, for example, in *Three girls and a Snowstorm*. Like in the case of nguo, a koika does not necessarily patronize a person, but, on the contrary, can harm him in every way, which does not cancel the rules for prohibiting the Nganasan from his koika — in this case he should do his best to appease him.

In addition to nguo and koika in the Nganasan religious beliefs, a significant place is occupied by “barusi”, which are one-armed, one-legged and one-eyed demons, dangerous to the living. According to one of the versions, barusi is the part of the human soul that remains after his death on earth. The daily life of Nganasans includes some taboos that allow a person to defend themselves from a dangerous collision with barusi. Many oral tales of Nganasans, recorded by researchers, include stories about one-eyed, humpback, one-legged and one-armed people who can later turn into shamans, seeking recognition of their importance in society (for example, *Three Brothers from The Corpus of Nganasan Folklore*).

Like in many of the world’s archaic shamanistic religions, shamans, who are the central figures of the religious life of the people, act as guides between worlds, penetrating into the heavenly and underground worlds during their rites, trying to balance the natural forces in favor of man. Shamanic rites of Nganasans occur in a chum, based on many rules and taboos (for example, separately from pregnant women), in ritual clothing, using a tambourine as a musical instrument that helps make the transition between worlds. Nganasans have a particularly well-developed folklore

musical culture, therefore the continuous performance of songs (with the participation of a person who accompanies a shaman in singing and does not allow the song to become silent during significant pauses that the shaman makes) is a significant element of a shamanic ritual.

One of the main tasks of the shaman in the Nganasan society is to protect from and get rid of diseases. Nganasans believe in the spirits of diseases that are called “kocha”. To get rid of diseases, sacrifices are most often performed, including sacrificial animals — deer and dogs.

Animalism and the associated field cults are also a significant aspect of the Nganasan religion, for which man exists in close dependence on the animal world. In the section *General Animistic Views*, A.A. Popov describes such animals as bear, deer, wolf, dogs, hare, gull, crow, etc., to be especially important for Nganasans. Deer is the most important animal among them (in exactly the same way as for the majority of the indigenous peoples of the Siberian north), since the hunting life of Nganasans is directly related to these animals. G.N. Gracheva mentions a little-known cosmogonic legend of Nganasans, in which man descended from the wool of the Mother-deer, but along with this legend there are other histories of man's origin (from a bear, with the help of a stone bird, etc.), which presents difficulties for obtaining unambiguous ideas about cosmogony in the Nganasan religious beliefs.

Among the rituals in the Nganasan religious life, the festival of the Pure Chum (Madusia), which marks the end of the polar night, is most fully described and documented.

Religious beliefs of Nenets people

Nenets epic works were used as material for analysis: songs of yarabts, songs of sudbabts and shamanic chants (Fol'klor nentsev, 2001).

The world consists of three parts: the Heaven, the Earth and the Underworld. The sky has seven layers; it is high above the earth; one can penetrate the sky through a hole in it. The higher the heavens are, the warmer one can feel there. The sky is a prototype of the structure of the Earth: it has the sea, hills, forest, chums and deer; there is an island of a cloud, on which there are three chums in the Heaven — Heaven-Shaking-Thunder, Wandering-Thunder and Sitting-Thunder. The Master of the the Heaven is the Old Man-Num, whose existence is full of secrets. Besides, Yav-Mal lives in Heaven as well. Helping good people to defeat enemies (otherwise people and deer will be exterminated), the Heaven insists on the mercy of innocent people.

Like the Heaven, the Earth consists of seven layers, people live at the upper level, below is the Underworld. Once the shaman ousted the evil people who dominated the Earth (the Host of the Underground World — Nga and the Old Woman Nga) into the Underworld. The distinction between the top as good and the bottom as dangerous is present in different areas: the inhabitants of the mountains are strong, honest people who respect traditions; the inhabitants of the lowlands live by deceit and war; voices from above belong to good forces.

The underground world connects with the world of the living through a hole, near which two old women meet newcomers. The underworld is arranged as the heavenly and the earthly ones: there are lakes, chums; but it is dark there, bones are scattered, blood is poured, fire is blazing. The head of the underworld is Nga, living with the Heartless Tungu and the Master of Mammoths and Deer in three chums. The similarity of the name “Tungu” with the endoethnonym of Evenks draws attention to itself, which indicates unfriendly relations between Nenets and Evenks. The underground world is inhabited by evil spirits and dead people. Evil spirits kill innocent people. The social order of the world of the dead is similar to the world of the living, its inhabitants are engaged in the same activities in it. The one who gets into the world of the dead meets their deceased relatives, finds a new family, in which children can be born. The world of the dead differs from the world of the living in depravity, a cardinal change. The dead have the gift of divination; in particular, they predict death for the alive. The dead die a second time, already in the afterlife.

The underworld is developed in the Nenets epos better than the Heaven, which can be explained by the fact that potentially the transition between the Earth and the Underworld will be made by almost all people at the time of death.

The main minister of the Nenets religious cult is the shaman. There are earthly and heavenly shamans; Heavenly shamans are three Thunders, which perform shamanistic rituals using a copper tambourine. The shaman is the most powerful figure of the earthly world: they protect against evil forces; they stand up to the inhabitants of the Heaven; they are able to overcome death; they cure diseases. Shamans help only good people. Earth shamans turn to celestial inhabitants for help, but they first experience it before bestowing upon them (deer and wife).

The ability of the shaman to heal from diseases is due to the fact that they are sent by the evil inhabitants of the Underworld, with whom the shaman can fight themselves or with the help of the inhabitants of the Heaven. When the struggle unfolds between the shaman and Nga, the shaman has to pay dearly for the victory. Other ways to

get the desirable from the inhabitants of the Underground are to use their inaction or sacrifice deer.

In order to interact with the inhabitants of the Heaven and the Underworld, the shaman must move between worlds. To get to the Sky, deer are on the road for three days four times (four tracks). In the Underworld, deer easily transport their host through raging fire. The shaman's deer are special: one of them is associated with the Underworld, the other one is the deer of the Sky-dweller Yav-Mala. Moving between the worlds does not take place in the physical form, observers record only the shaman's rite, divided into those very "tracks" — segments of the way, which are overcome by deer without rest. The rite is carried out with the help of a tambourine; a tambourine made of deerskin, horns, bones is a shamanic deer.

Since only the shaman is able to move between the worlds, miraculously survived after a collision with the sea (in fact, those who have returned from the World of the Dead) frighten others as evil spirits, Ngylek. Things that have visited the world of the dead need to be destroyed; a person who has returned from there cannot be cleansed; they bring misfortune, are followed by death, and only a shaman can exorcise it.

Burial rites are specified in the epic works: a separate chum is prepared for a dying person; it is impossible to cry for the dead for a long time; in the absence of a body, funeral rites are not performed, and this situation is much more tragic than death.

Some interviews among the Nenets from the village Nosok and Noskovskaya tundra were conducted in 2011. In all the interviews, the layer of traditional Nenets religious ideas about the world order is completely absent, so attention will be focused on the modern features of a religious cult.

According to the inhabitants of Nosok, there are no shamans in the village. At the same time, the life of the Nenets is still largely permeated with various rites and customs. A large stratum of rituals is made up by purifying rites, they are necessary for the purification of the home, before hunting, after returning from the cemetery, etc. Some families have guarding idols-charms that cannot be touched by strangers. To succeed, idols placate with fat, vodka, smoke, etc. Idols are passed down from generation to generation; they are both female and male.

Separate prohibitions and regulations remain relevant: you cannot drive across the camp; you cannot drive to sacred places. Things are divided into male and female. A woman should not walk in a chum behind the stove, step on a man's things, she should not eat red fish. The locals could not explain what the foundations of these prohibitions are.

Nenets still keep traditional ideas about the afterlife: people continue to engage in the same activities there as during their lifetime, to use the same everyday things. Therefore, when a reindeer herder dies, sledges, trochees are put next to his grave, and a deer is slaughtered. Each deceased is given a utensil, which he used during his lifetime. The dead can be contacted, for which their relatives hang bells over the graves and ring them, coming to the cemetery and leaving it.

Religious beliefs of Enets

This study of the religiosity of Enets people consists of three parts, namely, the peculiarities of the formation of Enets religiousness, the religious ideas of Enets, the Christianization of Enets, and the current religious state.

Cultural traditions and religiosity of Enets are generally considered within the framework of a general Samodian ethnogenesis. It is possible to reveal the features of the traditions of southern Siberia in their cultural characteristics. These traditions came to the Enets culture due to the resettlement of several South-Siberian peoples to the North. They became the basis for the emergence of the Enets culture. The second important source of influence on the formation of the Enets culture is the Arctic nationalities. This influence is manifested in the culture of Enets in the form of the hero of the legends Morredenyu, which is translated into Russian as “Wild Deer Hunter”.

The Enets ethnic group, like no other nationalities of Russia, was subject to assimilation with other ethnic groups. As a result, their culture, including religion, has similar features and elements with other peoples of Siberia. This is especially true of Nenets, Nganasans and Dolgans.

The Enets religious thinking can be described as a synthesis of shamanism with a traditional worldview. The shamanism of Enets is very similar in structure to the shamanism of other peoples of Siberia. The shaman is an important participant in all rites and rituals.

In the traditional way of life of Enets, religious thinking permeated their entire daily lifestyle. For example, a newborn child was given something like a nickname. As a rule, it described their appearance, or was somehow related to the situation of their conception or birth. This was the “name” that the child had before their adolescence. After that, they took the name of a deceased ancestor.

A high level of ideas about duty and stereotypes of behavior also come from the religious ideas of Enets. It was believed that for such atrocities as theft, disrespectful behavior towards the elder, a person would be punished from above.

Religiosity also prescribed an Enets to respect nature, since it was perceived as a necessary source for life. This attitude is manifested in the rites of return, in a careful and respectful attitude to beasts, fish, birds when hunting.

The similarity of the plots, the names of the characters, their description and the functions of the Enets divine pantheon with other peoples of Siberia indicate that the peculiarities of the mythological notions were formed in the era of the Samoyed ethnic unity (no later than the end of the 1st millennium BC — beginning of the 1st millennium AD).

The structure of the universe in the mind of Enets is threefold: the Above (heaven), the Far World (earth), the Lower World (hell). The Above is divided into seven levels. The seventh level is the farthest. The lower world consists of seven levels of ice. In Enets most ancient legends, the images of the sun and the moon had the anthropomorphic features of a woman and a man, respectively. The interpretation of the spots on the moon is interesting — Enets perceived them as a shaman named Pian-tuku, who, using a tambourine ritual, brought the moon closer to him and stuck to it. The Milky Way is the trail of the character of the legends Di'A.

In the Enets mythological pantheon, the following main supreme characters can be identified: Todote, Nga, Dia-menyuo.

The main supreme demiurge in the Enets pantheon is Nga. He lives on the seventh level of heaven.

Todote is the supreme evil deity, who lives underground. His diet consists of people whom he obtains thanks to his servants-demons Amuke. Catching people is very similar to the way people hunt animals. Who will be food is determined by the other god (supreme) Nga and Dia-menyuo, the old woman who “weaves” the book of destinies. Some legends claim that they are the parents of Todote. Also, Enets believed that a person died under the influence of Todote — he blew his breath into a person, after which he fell ill and went into another world.

The lower level characters include countless hosts-spirits of natural objects, as well as helper spirits and various patrons. Most often they were represented in the form of people or animals.

An important feature of the religious beliefs of Enets is the belief in Mothers of Nature, which personified the elements of nature, namely: Mou-nyama (earth), Kou-nyama (sun), Tui-nyama (fire), By-nyama (water). It was Mothers who determined the harmony of the entire universe, the interaction of its various hypostases, the role of man and the forms of his interaction with the world around him, his values and ideals.

When a man died, he was wrapped in robes designed for the funeral rite, sewn into reindeer skins, and then put on sledges and taken away to the tundra, where a wooden hut with no entrance was placed over the dead. A ritual murder of a deer, which carried sleds, took place near the hut, and the things of the deceased were left there, depending on their sex. If it was a man, then they left a trap, a spear and a boat, if it was a woman, they left a thimble, dishes, a cauldron, a needle case. An important feature is that the property was left in a broken form. Besides, the presence of a shaman was necessary. After the funeral ceremony was performed, its participants stepped over the fire or a dead dog for the purification rite.

In the Enets folklore we can distinguish the legends of the historical and mythological sense. The legends about real historical events and their heroes are called “Dere”, which means “to lead.” The mythological legends are called “syudobichu”, which is translated as “myths”. The mythological legends were told in a recitative manner.

The Orthodox culture did not have a strong influence on the religious ideas of Enets due to the strong remoteness of their territories from the Orthodox centers. Rather complex structural and organizational features of Orthodoxy, dissimilarity with traditional ideas are also important factors in its unpopularity. All of the above made it difficult for missionaries to popularize Orthodoxy among Enets.

At the moment, Enets are Orthodox only officially; the elements of traditional beliefs are still present in their beliefs: the cult of nature, the spirits of the world. There are even rituals of sacrifice in the form of offerings with money, pieces of clothing and deer meat. Nevertheless, it is possible to note the reverse trend in the loss of traditional elements. The divine pantheon lives only in mythical tales and fairy tales. Many ceremonies go away. The funeral rite is now all-Russian, with a coffin and a usual burial. There is no hut or killing of a deer. Only the element with the property of the deceased has been preserved. Now they put him right in a coffin.

Conclusion

Based on the review of the characteristics of religious beliefs of all four peoples under consideration, the following conclusions can be drawn.

Firstly, the basis of the religious beliefs of all four peoples is shamanism as a religious worldview that is traditional for all indigenous peoples of the northern and

Siberian territories. This is manifested, above all, in the general three-part structure of the world and the central role of the shaman.

Secondly, in the modern form, the religious beliefs of all four peoples to some extent include elements of Orthodoxy.

Thirdly, the results of field studies record the gradual loss of traditional religious beliefs, which is manifested in the lack of practice of addressing shamans, ignorance of the meaning of many restrictive rituals and elements of ceremonial actions, incomplete reproduction of elements of religious rituals.

Fourthly, elements of traditional religious beliefs are preserved to a greater degree in relations with the natural world, with the world of deceased ancestors, and in everyday activities (household magic).

The commonality of Nenets and Enets is the peculiarity of their religious culture. The elements of the Enets religion were more susceptible to assimilation processes, especially with their closest neighbors, Nenets.

The traditional religious culture of Nenets has the most developed and clear system of beliefs with a detailed description of the structure of the world and religious rites. In the current state these practices are almost completely lost.

The religious culture of Nganasans is the most complex and diverse phenomenon with different variations of the structure of the world and rites, which presented great difficulties for researchers already during the 20th century.

The religious culture of Dolgans stands out among the four peoples due to the most vivid manifestation of the influence of the Orthodox culture and the connection with the traditional religious views of Yakuts and Evenks. In their present form, Dolgans are the most Christianized indigenous people of the North in the Krasnoyarsk Territory.

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Религия долган, нганасан, ненцев и энцев

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Данное исследование рассматривает особенности традиционных религиозных верований коренных малочисленных народов Красноярского края — долган, нганасан, ненцев и энцев. Авторы используют сравнительно-исторический и историографический методы, а также опираются на результаты полевых исследований, проведенных сотрудниками кафедры культурологии Гуманитарного института Сибирского федерального университета на территории компактного проживания этих народов в Красноярском крае в период с 2010 по 2018 годы.

Исследование представляет обзор основных особенностей традиционных религиозных воззрений каждого из обозначенных коренных малочисленных народов с определением их современного состояния.

Результаты исследования позволяют определить общие и особенные черты, свойственные религиозным верованиям долган, нганасан, ненцев и энцев, проживающих в Красноярском крае как в их традиционном варианте, так и в современном состоянии.

Ключевые слова: религия коренных малочисленных народов Севера и Сибири, Красноярский край, долганы, нганасаны, ненцы, энцы.

Научная специальность: 24.00.00 — культурология.
