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Stages of the Tungus-Manchu Wedding Ceremony of the 19th-early 20th Centuries as an Indicator of the Ethnocultural Mentality

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Abstract. The article is devoted to one of the traditional life cycle rituals, the wedding ceremony of the Tungus-Manchus, based on the materials of the late 19th-early 20th century. Ritual practice is an up-to-date issue in today's ethnography and cultural studies. The main semantic meaning of the Tungus-Manchu wedding ceremony is the union of a man and a woman of two exogamous genera. The article reveals the mental features of the main Tungus-Manchu wedding ceremony stages at three levels: action, folklore and material. The paper employs the hermeneutical method of analysing the material that studies the ritual, the material world and folklore associated with the wedding from the cultural text point of view. In general, the study relies upon the analysis of the symbolism and semantics of the Tungus-Manchu wedding ceremony. Based on the analysis of the main stages of the Tungus-Manchu wedding ceremony, the author concludes that the mental principle of the Tungus-Manchu wedding ceremony is the union of a man and a woman in marriage, perceived as the unity of the male and female elements associated with the cult of fertility, as well as their transition to a new status of married people, and the cosmic aspect of the unity of heaven and earth, the sun and the moon, the material component of the ritual.

Keywords: wedding ceremony, Tungus-Manchus, semantics, mental features.

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Research area: ethnography; history.

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Этапы свадебной обрядности тунгусо-маньчжуров XIX – начала XX в. как показатель этнокультурного менталитета

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Аннотация. Статья посвящена одному из традиционных ритуалов жизненного цикла – свадебной обрядности тунгусо-маньчжуров по материалам конца XIX – начала XX века. Изучение ритуальной практики является актуальной проблемой в этнографии и культурологии. Главный семантический смысл свадебной обрядности тунгусо-маньчжуров заключался в единении мужчин и женщин двух экзогамных родов. Статья раскрывает ментальные особенности главных этапов свадебной обрядности тунгусо-маньчжурских народов в сравнительном плане на трех уровнях: акциональном, фольклорном и материальном. В статье использован герменевтический метод анализа материала, изучающего ритуал, вещный мир и фольклор, связанные со свадьбой, с позиции текста культуры. В целом материал статьи рассмотрен с позиции анализа символики и семантики свадебной обрядности тунгусо-маньчжуров. На основании анализа основных этапов свадебной обрядности тунгусо-маньчжуров автор пришел к выводу о том, что ментальные основания свадебной обрядности тунгусо-маньчжуров состояли в соединении мужчин и женщин в браке и воспринимались как единение мужского и женского начала природы, связанного с культом плодородия, а также перехода их в новый статус замужних и женатых людей, и космический аспект единения неба и земли, солнца и луны, вещной составляющей ритуала.

Ключевые слова: свадебная обрядность, тунгусо-маньчжуры, семантика, ментальные особенности.

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Introduction

The problem of studying the ethnocultural mentality is one of the most popular in Russian historiography. The mental features of any ritual practice are manifested in its structure: behavioural ritual, material objects, and folklore narratives. Thus, the ethnocultural mentality is characterised by disclosing the way of thinking (what and how people think) at the level of the worldview, archetypes of behaviour, ways of life, cultural symbols and values, and cultural artefacts. It becomes visible in the models

of rituals, narratives' formulas, material world objects, and their decor.

There are well-known published papers devoted to the studies of Tunguso-Manchu mentality (S. M. Shirokogorov, G. I. Varlamova, A. A. Sirina, N. V. Ermolova, S. V. Bereznitsky, L. I. Missonova, V. N. Davydov, A. N. Varlamov, T. D. Bulgakova, A. F. Startsev, V. V. Podmaskin, T. Iu. Sem). Among foreign works, there are articles and books by A. Lavrillier, D. Brondishauskas, A. Dumont and others on

political history, ruler's status, natural phenomena, economic activity, technology, beliefs, rituals, and artistic culture. These works deal with material culture, economic activity, individual elements of ritual practice (commercial, calendar), the pantheon, and shamanism. They reveal the specifics of the relationship between nature and economy, beliefs, and the sacred landscape.

A wedding ceremony characterises the relationship between two social groups (genera), men and women, who unite in marriage and create a family as a social, economic and spiritual unit of society. Wedding rites include a complex behavioural set of rituals, taboos, exchange of gifts, locality of their conduct, the role of the male and female halves of the genus-linearity, associated with particular material objects of the wedding and folklore. The primary meaning of the wedding ceremony is the unity of the male and female elements of the two genera based on the cult of fertility.

The Tungus-Manchu wedding rite studies of the 19th-early 20th centuries usually focused on a general description of the people's culture as a whole. They are associated with the names of P.P. Shimkevich, I.A. Lopatin, S.M. Shirokogorov, B.O. Pilsudsky, A.M. Zolotarev. In more detail, the action aspect of the wedding was studied in the mid-late twentieth century by such famous scientists as G.M. Vasilevich, Iu.A. Sem, E.A. Gaer, A.V. Smoliak, V.S. Starikov, A.V. Romanova and A.N. Myreeva, U.G. Popova, A.F. Startsev. These works also contained separate elements of the analysis of the wedding folklore (good wishes) and material items (clothing, jewellery). In the subsequent period of the 21st century, the problems of wedding and family rites of individual Tungus-Manchu tribes, e.g. Nanai, Udege, and Negidal people were studied by A.F. Startsev, S.V. Bereznitsky, and E.V. Fadeeva. The main focus of these works was the action aspect of the wedding rituals of the Tungus-Manchus. Questions of folklore and the materiality of the wedding ritual are poorly studied. A comparative study on the wedding rites of all the Tungus-Manchu peoples has not been conducted before.

Problem statement and theoretical framework

In this regard, the purpose of this article is to study the main mental features of the wedding ceremony of all the Tungus-Manchu peoples in comparative terms in the process of its main stages at three levels, i. e. action, folklore and material items. The objectives of the study are laid down in its goals: to consider the different statuses of the ritual behaviour of the wedding ceremony: art, games, ceremony, space arrangement; to investigate the features of the material objects employed in the wedding ceremony; to characterise wedding wishes as an element of folklore. The scientific novelty of the article lies in the fact that this is the first time the wedding ceremony is described in comparative terms from the position of the ethnocultural mentality on three levels: actional, material and folklore.

Method

The primary methodological approach to the study of the designated topic, i. e. the wedding rites of the Tungus-Manchus as an indicator of the ethnocultural mentality-involves a hermeneutic analysis of the material, i. e., the study of ritual, material objects and folklore from the perspective of the cultural text.

Discussion

The problem of wedding rite studies is identifying its symbolism and semantics at the ritual and material levels. This aspect has been poorly studied in the papers published so far. This study focuses on this problem from the perspective of a comparative analysis of the main stages of the wedding ceremony of all groups of Tungus-Manchus. The paper relies upon the principal works of scientists who describe the wedding rituals of the Tungus-Manchus.

The main stages of the Tungus-Manchu wedding ceremony are: 1. Matchmaking, agreement about marriage and bride price, *kalym*. 2. Delivery of *kalym* to the bride's father's house. 3. Feast at the bride's house. 4. Re-entry of the bride to the groom's house. 5. Customs and rituals in the groom's house. 6. Marriage. 7. Wed-

ding feast at the groom's house. 8. Departure of relatives.

The Tungus-Manchu peoples sought wives in other families, mostly from their mother's side, strictly observing the principles of exogamy, as they were afraid of evil spirits. Marriage between siblings was a taboo (Gaer, 1991: 64; Bereznitsky, 1993: 143; 2000: 23; Tugolukov, 1980: 54; Lindenau, 1983: 65). Therefore, for example, according to our field materials collected in Yakutia by P. Olenek in 1988–1990 and P. Iengra in 1994, the Evenki would often go far away to find a bride in another district or region from Yakutia to Evenkia, from the north to the south of Yakutia, up to the Khabarovsk Territory. And the Nanai and other peoples of the Amur would travel from one village to another. There were also known interethnic marriages of Nanai people with Ulchi, Nivkhs, Udege people, Negidals (Sternberg, 1933: 21, 286–289).

Before matchmaking, after the end of the fur hunting season, the young Udege men would come to visit their maternal relatives to look for a bride for themselves or their sons. There, they would spend time around the campfire with dances, games, and treats (Startsev, 2005: 211).

During matchmaking, matchmakers from other families would come to the bride's house to do various well-being rituals. According to the Evenk tradition, a whistling arrow would be shot into the air to protect all the ritual participants from the evil spirits and notify them of the groom's intentions (Vasilevich, 1969: 160). The Nanai also shot an arrow into the sky during matchmaking in the groom's house. The Orochons of Transbaikal had a tradition of installing two freshly cut trees at the bride's father's house: the matchmaker with an icon in his hands had to walk between the trees. After that, he bowed to the household idols and the bride's father. Then he delivered three deer as part of the *kalym* (Tugolukov, 1980: 58). The Sim Evenks have another interesting custom: the matchmaker must come to the bride's father's house with a staff decorated with red cloth rags (Vasilevich, 1969: 160). The staff symbolised the rod of happiness, the ancestral tree of life and fertility. According to our field

materials of 1988, collected from the Evenks of Olenek by Benchik V. A., the matchmaker used a female deer staff from the bride's dowry with an L-shaped silver pommel with a protective zigzag carving and three circles on the shaft, symbolising the three suns of the three worlds. According to the tradition of the Yakutian Evens, the matchmaker would lay some firewood in the bride's ancestral hearth, wishing her well on the part of the groom and making a pass at the bride's ancestral hearth (Aleksееva, 2008:162). Among the Udege people, if the bride's parents agreed to the marriage, the matchmaker would give them a silver one-rouble coin, a bracelet, and a pair of earrings (Startsev, 2005: 216). In the 18th century, in the tradition of the Tungus of the Chapagir living by the Angara River, the matchmaker had to bring a deer bridle and an iron palm tree to the house of the bride's father (Tugolukov, 1980: 55). Among the Okhotsk and Yakut Evens, the presentation of a tobacco pouch to the bride's father by the matchmaker was also a meaningful ceremony. It was a woman's pouch embroidered with blue, white, and black beads. Usually, the embroidery pattern on the pouch was an equilateral cross or a spider. It symbolised a talisman against evil spirits, while a spider, according to our field materials of 1982 from the northeast of Yakutia, the village of Kolymskoye, was the zoomorphic hypostasis of the progenitor goddess, patroness of women and home. If the father took the tobacco pouch and a pipe in his hands, it meant that he approved the marriage of his daughter (Popova, 1981:153–154; Aleksееva, 2008: 162). Among the Nanai people, it was customary to present the bride's family with vessels of rice vodka, quite an expensive item the Amur peoples bought from the Chinese or Japanese (Lopatin, 1922: 151). A drink offered to the spirits of the hearth, vodka was considered to be more than an alcoholic beverage, but a sacred substance bringing happiness to the future family.

Agreement in matchmaking was usually concluded when the young people reached the reproductive age of 14–16 years. But the Nanais, Evenks, Manchus could make matches for children who were not yet born or were in the mother's womb; for the Evenks, Evens,

Nanais, it was quite common to match young children. Based on the levirate principles, the wife could be sometimes much older than her husband (Shirokogorov, 2017: 371, 376–377; Lopatin, 1922: 149–150; Shimkevich, 1896: 98; Startsev, 2005: 213, 215; Gaer, 1991: 65). The most common method of marriage was through paying the bride price, *kalym*, or *tori* in Tunguska. In addition, sometimes the matches were made by exchanging sisters, rarely by kidnapping or as a result of military clashes during family feuds before the arrival of the Russians (Vasilevich, 1969: 156–157; Shimkevich, 1896: 92; Bereznitsky, Fadeeva, 2014: 200; Startsev, 2005: 214). At the end of the 19th – early 20th century, *kalym* was already more than a dowry. It was a half or a third more than it (Shirokogorov, 2017: 37; Tugolukov, 1980: 54–55). Interestingly, in ancient times, marriages required equal exchange, with the *kalym* equal to the dowry (Vasilevich, 1969: 157).

According to the Tungus-Manchu folklore, the groom's wedding test played an important role in the matchmaking process. The Evens, Nanais, and Evenks would make such a test in the form of an archery competition: usually, it required to make a shot through iron or wooden things, hit the eye of a needle, or lift a heavy stone (Lindenau, 1983: 65; Chadaeva, 1986: 66–67; Shimkevich, 1896: 70; Romanova, Myreeva, 1971: 286–287). Also, in folklore, the bride chose her groom by throwing her hat on him (Shimkevich, 1896: 106). The Nanai folklore said that if a girl breaks the bowstring of a young man, she will become his wife (Chadaeva, 1986: 66).

During the matchmaking process, the matchmakers and the bride's father negotiated the composition and size of the *kalym*. In the late 19th – early 20th centuries, for the Transbaikalian Evenks it could be around 20–60 deer (Shirokogorov, 2017: 375); the Sakhalin Evenks requested various furs, Chinese silk, 20–30 deer and 50–300 rubles (Tugolukov, 1980: 59); the Manchus preferred cattle (pigs, sheep, geese), fabrics, clothing, vodka, and money as an essential part (Starikov, 1965: 681); the middle-class Nanais offered money, 2 cast-iron cauldrons, 10 pieces of Chinese silk, 3 buckets of vodka, clothing including a Chinese robe,

as well as some pigs (Lopatin, 1922: 149), the rich Nanai *kalym* could include 100 robes and 40 pairs of shoes, several dozens of *nogovits*, dishes, tools (Gaer, 1991: 69). At one of the Sakhalin excavation sites, a boat, a cauldron, *tol* jewellery, a Manchurian robe, etc. were found (Pilsudsky, 1989: 19). The Udege people requested the *kalym* of 50–100 roubles in cash, sables or different goods, and some clothing.

In the bride's house, special attention was paid to sacrificial rites. For example, the Evens smeared the hearth in the yurt with the blood of the sacrificial she-deer, sprinkled it around the hearth, and sacrificed the carcass to the patron spirit of the family (Popova, 1981: 155).

In some groups of the Evenks, as well as Negidals, Udege, and Nanai, the first feast was held in the house of the bride's father. The young couple spent their wedding night, concluding the marriage, which testified to the matrilocality of the marriage (Sternberg, 1933: 532; Lopatin, 1922: 152–153; Shirokogorov, 2017: 382; Gaer, 1991: 69; Startsev, 2005: 217; Gaer, Bereznitsky, 2003: 204). According to the tradition of the horse breeding Tunguses, the first wedding night was spent in the groom's house (Shirokogorov, 2017: 395–396).

In the house of the bride's father, the young girl dressed in festive and wedding clothes. For the reindeer-breeder Evenks, it was typical to dress the bride in 3–4 of her best dresses with a shawl over her shoulders and a special scarf attached to her belt (Shirokogorov, 2017: 386). Judging by the REM collections, the Nanai bride's clothing also included a festive fishskin or cotton robe decorated with a curved ornament on the back with the image of dragons or bears, figures of fertility deities, and the tree of life (REM Col. 1871–22, 1524–3, 10018–68, 4218–1). A bib with bronze plaques was a mandatory element of wedding clothing (Gaer, 1991: 71).

The main element of the wedding outfit for the Transbaikalian Evenks was a kaftan and a *yoji* vest, for the Nanai, Ulchi, and Negidal people, it was a sleeveless *sike* robe worn over a festive robe. *Shike* was a top similar to the Turkic *chigidek* (Shirokogorov, 2017: 393; Sem, 1973: 215–225; Melnikova, 2005: 169–191; Titoreva, 2016: 217–220; Sem, 2016: 210–216; REM

Col. 2566–21,22; MAE Col. 1837–104, 107; 3656–1). The shirtless *sike* robe was usually made from the red deer's fur and embroidered with deer hair and silk or from silk or cotton bought from Chinese or Russian merchants. On the back of the women's *shike*, two family trees with birds symbolising the souls of unborn children were embroidered together with some images of animals, often a dragon, the Koori bird, a tiger, which were believed to protect the young couple and bring them happiness. The symbolism of the robe was aimed at ensuring the fertility of the young wife and expressing her desire to have many healthy children. The REM museum collections contain many festive robes with a double left-hand hem, sewn from fish skin and decorated with an applique depicting the gods of fertility (Sem, 2016: 210–216; REM col. 1871–22, 1524–3, 1545–1, 10018–68, 4218–1). Most of the museum collections present women's wedding gowns, but there are several Ulchi, Nanai and Negidal men's outfits. The ornaments on the men's gowns differ for depicting birds and one family tree with birds. Besides the *sike* robe, there are other wedding clothing items in the museum collection (Melnikova, 2005: 181–184).

Among them, there are bibs with metal ornaments, bronze plaques and an eight-shaped pattern on the collar as a symbol of the goddess of fire and home; a Manchu multi-petalled bib symbolising the sun, the universe; a cap with spiral embroidery on the temples and decorated with buttons in the form of a cross on the forehead, symbols of the sun, transition to a new status; a wide belt with a cross-shaped, zigzag and spiral pattern; wedding mittens and armbands with a spiral ornament with the image of the fertility deities. For the Udege, it was common to keep the bride's attire in the bride's house. On the back of the wedding women's gown, there was a cross being a symbol of the four directions representing happiness and well-being. The shoes were embroidered on the tops and front. The groom was dressed in festive clothes as well (Startsev, 2005: 217).

During the wedding ceremony, the Nanai and Ulchi brides wore a silver breast ornament and a generic jade ring of green or white colour

with long chalcedony beads, which, touching each other, symbolised the union of the male and female principles, and fertilisation (Sem, 1973: 230–234; Chadaeva, 1986: 66–69; Gaer, 1991: 72). For this purpose, the Evenk brides wore multicoloured beaded crescent-shaped breast decorations and three long low beads ending in silver coins at the ends. This was associated with the cult of the moon and the ancestor goddess. The Amur Evenks, Manegras made ritual tribal shamanic complex of wooden idols, which included the image of a crescent moon with a woman's figure, on which the family tree was drawn (REM Col. 4216–470ab; On the edge of the worlds, 2006: 58).

The bride's wedding hairstyle was different from that of an unmarried girl's. The Nanai girls wore their hair in two braids, folded in several rows and tied with a string; the bride's hair was plaited in two braids, placed around the head with the ends hanging freely back (Gaer, Bereznitsky, 2003: 204). The horse breeding Tungus of Transbaikalia intertwined seven maiden's hair with two braids of the bride (Vasilevich, 1969: 165).

The most important stage of the Tungus-Manchu wedding ceremony was considered the bride's arrival at the groom's house. According to the tradition of Evenks and Evens, the bride would move to her groom's dwelling on horseback, covered with a red veil. The red colour symbolised the magic of fertility. The reindeer wore a wedding halter made of red cloth with three branches and decorated with beadwork and metal plaques. The number three characterised the three worlds of the universe. Together with the bride sitting astride the wedding deer, the matchmaker made three circles in the sun's direction around the groom's *chum*. The triple circumnavigation of the sun symbolised the cosmic aspect of the universe and the world order. Men shot arrows into the air or, later, fire their guns to ward off the evil spirits (Vasilevich, 1969: 162; Popova, 1981: 156–157). In the early 20th century, according to the Sakhalin Evenk tradition, the bride rode a reindeer to the groom's house, holding a staff with a silk handkerchief and an icon tied to it (Tugolukov, 1980: 60). Judging by the fact that the Manchu bride stepped over the threshold of her groom's

house in a saddle, she was sitting in a palanquin (Starikov, 1965: 681).

The Nanai, Ulchi, and Negidal people transported their brides by boat during summer or by dog sledges during winter. According to the ancient custom, the groom had to meet the bride and tear her veil off (Lopatin, 1922: 154; Bereznitsky, Fadeeva, 2014: 204; Smoliak, 1994: 130). The Ulchi had a well-known custom of keeping the bride in a boat (Zolotarev, 1939: 57–58). The Nanai people had a fascinating tradition of grabbing the bride (Lopatin, 1922: 161). The horse breeding Tunguses of Transbaikalia would play a fight for a pillow in the groom's house and make the ceremony of catching happiness (corresponding to the ancient rite of kidnapping the bride), as well as the ritual of galloping on horsebacks around the fire near the bride's house (Shirokogorov, 2017: 392). In this ritual, the bride symbolised the progenitor goddess, the patroness of the tree of life.

Special rites were performed at the entrance to the groom's house. The Evenki brides crossed the threshold by standing on a carpet made of reindeer head skins (Shirokogorov, 2017: 387–388), the Evens did that on a snow shovel or a seal carpet (Popova, 1981: 156–157), the Manchus would ride in the house in a saddle (Starikov, 1965: 681), while the Nanai, Ulchi, Negidal people performed the rite of stepping into the cauldron of the bride and groom, or kneeling on a fur carpet (Zolotarev, 1939: 57; Sternberg, 1933: 533; Lopatin, 1922: 154; Smoliak, 1994: 130). After crossing the threshold, the groom's mother treated the bride and the women who arrived with her to some meat, wine, and tea (Shirokogorov, 2017: 387–388). In the nomadic Tungus tribes of Transbaikalia, the mother met the bride with a cup of milk (Shirokogorov, 2017: 393). The Nanais organised the procession to the groom's house with a special wedding staff with a red cloth on top (Lopatin, 1922: 154). The Evens offered a sacrifice to the supreme deity Havki at their camp. They would slaughter a she-deer and hang its skin on a pole on the eastern side of the chum (Popova, 1981: 156). When the bride moved to the groom's house, the Ulchi performed the rite of offering a sacrifice to the pa-

tron spirit of Edeni land. The newlyweds were girdled with shavings in front of a trough with porridge, berries and *yukkola* (dry meat), and then this offering was taken to the taiga (Smoliak, 1994: 130). Before entering the groom's house, the Udege people prayed to the sun for the bright and happy life of the new family. After entering the house, the prayer was repeated (Startsev, 2005: 219).

It was customary for all Tungus-Manchu brides to make an offering to the spirit of the fire as soon as she entered the groom's house after the ritual of stepping over the threshold; it meant that she joined the groom's family (Shirokogorov, 2017: 387–388; Popova, 1981: 156–157; Lopatin, 1922: 154–155; Arsenyev, Archive of the OIAK PFRGO f. 1, op. 1, d. 5, 324; Startsev, 2005: 219). Leaving her house, the young woman carried a flint, steel and tinder to make a fire in the new home (Gaer, Bereznitsky, 2003: 205). According to the custom of the horse breeding Tungus, when the bride arrived at the groom's house, one of the groom's relatives would strike a fire and pass it to the father-in-law and other relatives of the bride and ask for the well-being of the fire (Tugolukov, 1980: 57).

Around the hearth, the bride and the women who came with her would hang and arrange the items from her dowry. Usually, it consisted of birch bark and wooden utensils, reindeer saddlebags, festive clothing, bed linen, jewellery including bronze *toli* mirrors, bronze plaques, earrings, rings and feathers, and so on. Among the dowry items, the Nanai people had a rare exhibit, a carved spoon with a figurine symbolising wealth (REM Col. 1524–28). The carvings and ornaments on the figurine carried a symbolic meaning associated with the magic of fertility. When the mother gave the bride this spoon as a dowry, she wished her long happy life and many children. More complex was the rite of sacrifice adopted by the Manchus from the Sungari Nanai. Entering the house of the groom, the bride and other women bowed three times and lit some incense for the heaven and the earth, while the men shot arrows to ward off evil spirits, then bowed to the ancestors and the ancestral fire (Lin Chun Shen, 1934: 220; Starikov, 1965: 681). Among the Udege people,

the newlyweds prayed to the hearth, asking the spirits for a prosperous life (Bereznitsky, 2000: 23). Orochi prayed in front of the groom's house, at noon – in the sun, then prayed in front of the hearth (Bereznitsky, 2001: 25).

The dowry of the reindeer Tungus consisted of two parts: reindeer, horses or cattle, as well as money, tools, clothing, boilers and other utensils (Shirokogorov, 2017: 378). The dowry of the horse breeding Tunguses was somewhat different. It included pillows, two large chests with dishes and utensils, women's and men's clothes and shoes, some sweets, wine, milk vodka, nuts, some money, several handkerchiefs, sheep and goat skins (Shirokogorov, 2017: 391). The Udege dowry consisted of two festive robes, utensils, household items, tools, and 50 silver rubles (Startsev, 2005: 213, 218). Among the Ulchi, the dowry consisted of a bed, wooden and birch-bark utensils, dressing gowns, fur coats and other clothing, pieces of cloth; the rich would give a horse with a harness (Smoliak, 1994:129). The Orochi dowry consisted of a Chinese silk robe with dragons, a Chinese white sheep fur coat, Chinese cast-iron cauldrons, a bear spear with inlay, 5–7 Orochi robes, a set of household items and utensils, jewellery, bronze plaques (Bereznitsky, 2001: 24).

The second wedding feast was held at the groom's house, after the feast at the bride's house. It usually lasted for 2–3 days (Gaer, Bereznitsky, 2003: 206). The Manchus ate millet soup and mutton on this day (Starikov, 1965: 681), the Evenks preferred venison, pies, wine and tea (Shirokogorov, 2017: 388–389), the Evens arranged a tea party with flatbread, meat of ritual reindeer, dish of fish and berries with fat (Popova, 1981: 157–158). The Evenks would dance the *yohor* roundelay dance during the celebration (Vasilevich, 1969: 162, 164).

An important place at this time was occupied by the benevolence of the bride and groom. Usually, the Amur Nanai people prayed to their ancestors' spirits for long and happy life, and many children in the new family. They offered some porridge, fish, tobacco, and vodka to the family hearth, and fed the home spirits (Lopatin, 1922: 154–155). The Aldan Evenks sang a benevolent song to the

young so that the bride and groom keep their family fire, have children, breed cattle and glorify their name, become respected people (Myreeva, 1990: 327).

At the end of the wedding festivities, there was dancing and games, and the guests were given some presents (Startsev, 2005: 220).

This was usually the end of the wedding; the guests would go home, and the young wife would begin settling down in the new house. The groom's relatives made sure that she showed her skills as a young hostess. The Iengri Evenk brides would spend the wedding day trying to be a good hostess, which was a ritual of initiation, the transition to a new status of a married woman.

Conclusion

In the conclusion of the study of the Tungus-Manchu wedding rites, it should be noted that a comparative analysis of its ritual action part, material objects and well-wishes revealed their important role in the formation of a new social unit as a result of the marriage of two young people, the bride and the groom coming from different families. The union of a man and a woman is perceived as the union of the male and female elements of nature, which carries more than just the social aspect of the transition to the new status of adult married people forming the basis for the tribal society, but also the cosmic aspect as the unity of heaven and earth for the Manchus and Nanaia, the sun and moon for all the Tungus-Manchus. From the economic point of view, marriage was also important as a union of two families to improve their well-being. The artistic and game significance of marriage consisted in changing the status of the man and the woman at the level of material objects and folklore, i. e. changing clothes, wearing jewellery, presenting dowry and *kalym* items, participation of the matchmaker in the marriage agreement, wishing good to the couple. The mental significance of the Tungus-Manchu wedding ceremony was the idea of fertility, the gender unity of two elements of nature, male and female, enshrined in the mythology of the cosmic foundations. In the ritual component of the wedding ceremony, an important role was played by ritual

gift exchange, rites, fertility magic, propitiatory magic, offerings to the ancestral fire and hearth, family patrons, heaven and earth, and ancestors.

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