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Editor's Page

Altai is the unique mountain system of Asia, which today unites four countries: Russia, Mongolia, China and Kazakhstan. Two ridges form the Altai mountain system: Mongolian Altai which stretches from north to south for 1,000 kilometres and divides China and Mongolia; and the Southern Altai which stretches from west to east for 125 kilometres. Its western part is situated in Kazakhstan. The central part divides Kazakhstan and China. The eastern part of the ridge is the boundary between Russia and China.

The historical-cultural and archeological monuments densely cover the territory of Russian Altai, especially its mountain part. Almost each expedition of the archeologists, cultural scientists and ethnographers brings new discoveries. But there is the whole system of sacred territories, which are revered by the local inhabitants since ancient times till now. These territories continue to function and because of it, attract a number of researchers, pilgrims and tourists, as well as simply curious people.

For a long time the ritual historical-cultural objects were the research field of archeologists. Ethnologists and anthropologists studied the spiritual component of the sacral sphere and for a century and a half, they produced colossal volume of the fact-based material, methods and methodological systems. But by the end of the 20th century, dire need was felt for the complex interdisciplinary investigations of the sacral objects. They allow to form integral understanding of the phenomenon of the sacral centre in its indissoluble unity of spiritual practices and their semiotic connotations in the spatial-temporary realities.

Since ancient times, people honour the Altai as a special, sacred place accessible for the selected. The inhabitants themselves called it *Ergene kun*, which means 'secluded', as its mountain valleys always gave to a man a

shelter and a reliable protection after the heavy passages in the Middle Asia space. The Altai surrounded, enveloped, took a man in itself. But it also demanded *the return efforts of the soul*. In the Russian language the word *у-кромный* (secluded) also means 'situated at the edge'. Mythological consciousness defines "edge" as the border of the worlds, the place where "this" and "that" worlds meet. A great number of sacral centres of the Altai (archaeo-astronomic, funeral, commemorative-ritual complexes) give evidence that since ancient times, the people here interacted with another reality. Besides, many sacral objects are almost inaccessible, *secluded*. One of the most mysterious places of the Altai, which has only now begun to open slightly its mysteries, is the plateau Ukok in the valley of the river Ak-Alaha. Here the archeologists discovered the unique grave of a Scythian priestess in 1990s. This event became popular all over the world under the name of "Altai princess" or "Icy princess".

Why does the Altai often get the definition "sacral"? In the translation from the Latin language *sacer* means "sacred, concerning the religious ritual". From the point of view of culturology, sacred or sacral objects are the cultural phenomenon which is natural consequence of cultural development, where it appears and in its turn defines the culture itself. In other words, the ancient sacral centres preserved on the territory of Altai and the modern sacred objects are not only archaeological and historical monuments. First of all, they are 'quintessence', the concentrate of the cultural processes of that epoch, when they appeared and the base of the contemporary knowledge and notions. Just in the sacral centre, ethnic values, religious beliefs, ideas about the creation of the world and the conditions of its stability are being concentrated. The presence of the sacral nucleus of culture supposes objectivization of the ideas in verbal and plastic forms, ritual-ceremonial and domestic actions and so on which are liable for inter-generational transmission¹. And till now representatives of the traditional cultures of Altai tend to preserve those elements of culture which were given by its sacral nucleus. Under the conditions of the active civilized processes, they are striving to preserve it and actualize as a factor of ethno-cultural identification and self-identification.

A great Russian philosopher A.F. Losev said once: "Myth is a miracle".

And the sacral centre is materialized in space and time myth – it is possible to say ‘materialized’ miracle. How can we perceive this miracle? What is its nature? In his fundamental work *Dialectics of Myth*, the philosopher established the stakes or criteria of the phenomena by which we can refer them to the notion ‘miracle’.

Miracle is not the violation of the laws of nature, but vice versa, the establishment and justification, their understanding. From the point of view of the mythological consciousness *the miracle is just the establishing and displaying of authentic, truly indissoluble laws of nature...*

Miracle possesses in its base the character of notification, demonstration, announcement, evidence, wonderful boding, manifestation, a kind of prophecy, exposure, but not the existence of the facts themselves, not the becoming of the events themselves... *The person who believes in miracle can never be disproved. Even the world ‘belief’ doesn’t suit here. He sees and knows miracle...*

Absolute mythology may choose only one way – to accept identical, *entirely equal value of both belief and knowledge... Such synthesis is a competence*, equally including in itself both belief and knowledge and not capable to exist without either belief or knowledge².

Father Pavel Florensky, formulated the meaning of the category ‘miracle’ briefly and clearly as maxim: “The question about miracle: miracle is not a trick... not the violation of the law, but it is the manifestation of another, higher law. The clouds are above us, but they touch peaks. And then who is on the peak – in clouds”³.

The sacral centres of the Altai are rather diverse by the volume, structure, functional meaning. They can be the whole sacral territories (large formations, consisting of several sacral complexes, united by the territory) or sacral complexes of different functional predestination (archaeo-astronomic complexes, necropolises, petroglyphic, ritual-ceremonial complexes), besides separate sacral objects (deer stones, rocky altars) and sacred natural objects.

The sacral territories present the vast landscape formations and having at the same time local completion. The complicated system of sacral complexes was formation on such territories during a long historical period.

It consists of heterogeneous elements – of different typology of sacral objects, but having semantic and aesthetic integrity. The specific conditions of the containing landscape stipulated the structural originality of each territory. In the mountain Altai there are the most considerable sacral territories. The numerous sacral complexes of the epoch of bronze, Scythian times and Turkic Middle Ages are located there. Plateau Ukok which is almost inaccessible even in modern conditions, is located at the height of 2,200 – 2,500 metres above sea level, formed by the landscape of high mountain tundra. The valley of Yustid river – the high mountain valley in the north-eastern part of the Chuisk steppe and the Karakol valley is the valley between the mountains of middle height in the central part of the mountain Altai.

From the point of view of the functional variety, the sacral territory on the river Yustid (Kosh-Agach region) is complicated and interesting. This is a vast territory, located at the height of 2,000 – 2,200 metres above sea level. It spreads for several kilometres along the Yustid river and includes in itself several thousand monuments: kereksurs, Afanasyev burial sites, Scythian, Turkic barrows, deer stones and petroglyphs.

In Altai, it is possible to meet the large temple-ritual complexes and separately standing altars, many of which the researchers attribute as archaeo-astronomical constructions to observe the Sky and inter-communicate with it. These constructions differ from analogous constructions of the city culture because they are organically built in natural landscapes. They rather often use natural objects as the elements of the given complexes, intended for astronomical observations. Such temples under the open sky are places of communication of a man and nature, they don't alienate a man from direct contact with It, but allowing to feel oneself like inalienable part of the Cosmos, actively interacting with It.

The most famous funeral-ritual complex, which started the study of Scythian culture in Altai, is, without doubt, the Pazirik stow in Ulagan region, opened by S.I. Rudenko in 1929. The excavations of Pazirik's barrows continued till 1949 and were elucidated both in the works of S.I. Rudenko⁴ himself and his followers.

This funeral-ritual complex, where for the first time the frozen lenses

of the funeral chambers were opened, gave vast material for study of sacral-economic, domestic, spiritual aspects of the life of ancient inhabitants of Altai. This allowed picking out a special archeological culture which got the name Pazirik. It signified a special stage of civilized development on the territory of Altai.

Not only grandiose temple complex may be sacral, but also a natural object (a spring, a mountain) or even simply a place, chosen by a man in the landscape on which he performs a ceremony. Along the river valleys, in stows, at the foot of ancestral mountains a great number of ancient monuments, cult and ritual places – people call them *bailu*, were preserved. They are inseparably linked with the landscape elements, which also have the status of sacred: they may be springs, separately standing mountains – *mezhelek*, and even separate trees, stones. Thus, in the valley of the river Yustid the local inhabitants honour only (on the length of all sacral territory) larch. It grows not far from deer complex. It is significantl, that toponym Yus-tit means: “A hundred of larches”. Not only the native Altaians, but also the Russian old-believers and the Altaian Kazakhs honour such natural objects.

The Altaian locus is closely saturated with both historical-cultural, and natural sacral objects. This creates in the perception of a human, who knows the geographical image of the Altai, the metaphor “Sacral Altai”. The metaphor in its turn, covering with archaeo types, corresponding symbolic and attributes becomes a Myth of full value.

Under the conditions of unique development of communications in the epoch of modernism and post-modernism, some sacral objects become requested not only for the native population but for the international community too. Local myths are being actualized for the representatives of other cultures, and become “trans-local” and even “pan-local”. They attract floods of pilgrims who do not belong to any ethnic or religious contexts of the given sacral object. So, the mountain Belukha today has got the meaning of the stable international narrative of the Shambala which has grown out of two local myths of the Altaians and Russian Old-Believers: the World Mountain and Belovodie. A prominent Russian artist, traveler and philosopher Nikolay Konstantinovich Roerich called the Altai

“Northen Shambala” and considered it one of the poles of the Eurasian cultural genesis: “Really, the Altai – the Himalayas are two magnets, two balances, two bases”⁵.

When a man mastered some territory, a sacral center appeared not as the consequence of this event but as its cause. It means that at first a man regulated his relations with the Space at all levels of three parted Universe – the World of Gods, the world of Demons and the Earthy World. And only after it he could be sure that his existence in the given Space will be safe and favourable.

For effective interaction with all levels of the Universe, it was necessary to build certain axial structures. The structures would be able to penetrate these levels. At all times and in all cultures, the temples and altars always played this role. And here Altai is not an exception. The ideas about the connection of a human with nature at the thin level exist in the Altaian culture till nowadays.

The researchers of the sacred objects of ancient times are of the same opinion that already during the epoch of bronze (from 5,000 to 2,000 B.C.) there existed their own canons and rules of search, marking and construction of the ritual complex, organically built in landscape. People of that time took into consideration geographical and energetic peculiarities of landscape. Apparently, specially prepared people – priests (people call them *kamas* in Altai) did it.

The keepers of ancient knowledge in the Altai affirm that the places, where ancient sacral objects are concentrated, provided social and also climatic and seismic stability of the territory through the mediation of specially prepared people (*kamas* and *yarlykchi*⁶). Today the study of systematic ties of the containing landscape and historical-cultural processes, combination of the structure of ritual complexes with the definite geological-geophysical conditions allows the study of the mechanisms of interaction of the elements of the system – Cosmos – Human – Planet by the natural-scientific methods.

This Special Issue of *Himalayan and Central Asian Studies*, focussed on “**The Sacred Altai**” brings to fore the results of the Altaian scientists - philosophers, culturologists, historians, art experts, philologists, who

provide their thorough analyses of different aspects of the phenomenon of the Altai sacrality, its spiritual values and secret meanings. This is a major contribution in the construction of the integral image of the Sacred Altai.

I.A. Zhernosenko

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CULTURAL LANDSCAPE OF ALTAI AS SACRAL CONSTANT OF THE PLANET

I.A. ZHERNOSENKO

ABSTRACT

This article examines the problem of choosing the optimal civilized strategy in the conditions of post-modernism – the noosphere model. Altai belongs to the basic (model) territories that possess the noosphere resource. This research is based on the idea of development of “culture-civilization” in the context of post-neoclassical mentality pertaining to the values of traditional and ethnic cultures. The subject of this work is fundamental for the Altai traditional culture concept – sacral center – a specific type of cultural landscape, which includes a number of qualities that allow characterizing Altai as the noosphere resource. The author’s special contribution consists of the determination of phenomena of the meaningful concept for the Altai people’s traditional culture – the “sacral center” and its place within the regional model of noosphere civilized development. This work also presents certain practical solutions aimed at the establishment of noosphere model, based on the territory of the Altai region.

Keywords: cultural landscape, noosphere resource, civilization and culture, sacral centers, post-modernism, noosphere region, cultural identity, spiritual culture, the transitional period, nature conformity

Today the humanity in pursuit of scientific-technical progress and growth of material well-being, alienates itself more and more from the natural environment, which it masters, destroying its integrity. The global crisis today destroys not only natural landscape, but the structure of human consciousness as well, especially the representatives of countries with developed economy. This paradox was formed long ago by O. Shpengler, who announced the decline of Europe, which cultivated a “sharp cold reasonableness”, science and non-religiousness as benefits of civilization,

that appeared to be hostile to culture¹.

Russian philosophers at the beginning of the 20th century, when values and foundations of spiritual life, culture, society and state were getting destroyed, were tormentingly looking for the causes of the catastrophe and found them in the emasculation of culture, which lost its primordial sense, connected with sacral. One of the main culturological categories, which they are working out is the definition of "cult". P.A. Florenskiy made valuable contribution in working out this problem. He affirmed: "Culture, as the etymology testifies is derived from cult, i.e. regulation of the whole world according to the categories of cult. Faith defines cult, cult defines the world view, from which in its turn culture follows."² Cult was understood by him like a kind of the first act of life, which predetermines the totality of all actions of a human and shows itself through liturgical activity.

N.A. Berdyaev also not without reason is looking for the sources of culture in syncretism of ancient cult: "Culture is connected with cult... it is the result of the differentiation of the cult, turning around its contents in different sides. Philosophical thought, scientific cognition, architecture, painting, sculpture, music, poetry, moral – all are concluded organically wholly into a church cult, in the form which isn't uncoiled yet and isn't differentiated... Culture is connected with the cult of forefathers, with legend and tradition"³.

N.K. Roerich in his culturological researches traces the term "culture" not to a traditional latin source – cultura, "cultivation" but to Sanskrit – Cult Ur, "Honouring the Light", filling it with a high spiritual sense coming from ancient sources. "And first of all, we'll remember that the word Culture may mean "Cult - Ur" – the Cult of Light"⁴. The above mentioned authors consider the process of origin of culture as an act of building of spiritual vertical line from up to down; as a fact of objectification of the highest idea in transformational activity of a human being.

In the works of philosophers and culturologists of the 20th century we can clearly understand the thought of divergence of culture and civilization. It is natural that in this period, well-known culturological binary terms "Culture – Civilization", "West – East" are formed. However,

post-modernism, with its denial of aggression and nihilism of technocratic epoch puts new accent on understanding the nature of culture-creation, recalling the traditional values and natural conformity of humanity, about necessity of restoring the lost ties of a human with nature, including the new technological level (creation of “similar to nature technologies”).

The values of traditional cultures which don't seem inscribed into the global trend of scientific-technical progress, have become downgraded by the postmodern civilization. But age old respect and spirituality of Nature by native people, self-identification of ethnoses, based on the connection of a human with land and its holy things, under the conditions of post-modernism begin to be understood as the base for building of an effective scenario of modern cultural genesis. So, the documents of Working Group of the United Nations concerning native people underline that: “Nobody possesses, including science, by knowledge of native people about the concrete natural surroundings in which they live, in the limits of its usage in their activity... As the Land itself is the most important source of knowledge and creation, all artistic and scientific achievements of the concrete nation are the expression of the same deep inter-communications and can be considered as expression of the people's activity on the whole”⁵. Moreover, the key thesis of the given statement is just not simply the land, but sacralized relations of a human with it. The dominant here – is the *relation* of a human, his moral imperative, his system of values.

Realization of the ethnic idea of any people is possible only in its predestined geographical locus which was defined by L.N. Gumilyov as “containing landscape”, by P.N. Savitskiy as “place of development”. “Containing landscape” has already become chresthomatic definition as given by L.N. Gumilyov: “The character of culture of the forming nationality is defined by containing landscape”⁶. But P.N. Savitskiy, who defined geosophy “as synthesis of geographical historical sources...”, insisted on the primacy of spiritual component in the process of mastering of the landscape, proving “organic tie” between ethnology and geography, religion and culture. The category “place of development” he had formulated in program manifesto of Eurasians – “Eurasianism (the experience of systematic narrative)”: “In fact, religion creates and defines

culture; and culture is a manifestation of religion, but not vice versa as it is still repeated in bad text books. The cultural unity in its turn is also the ethnological unity; the ethnology of cultural unity corresponds to its geography. Clearing up the rows of these correlations it is possible to defend the thesis about that both the religion creates culture, and the culture is ethnological type, the ethnological type chooses and finds "its" territory and considerably in its own way, transforms it"⁷.

When a human masters the natural landscape, the formation of cultural space begins with the sacralization of a certain centre, around which the "chaos" of the natural world is being regulated (in the meaning of spontaneous absence of structuring but not "disorder"). Archetypes are being actualized, objectified in specific images which are typical for surrounding environment. That is, at first a human regulates his relations with Space at all levels of three-part Universe – the World of Gods, the World of Demons and the World of Earth and only after that, he may be sure that his existence in the given Space will be safe and favourable.

Primordially the natural space is felt by a human as chaos, "where no orienting point is possible, where it is impossible to orient", but the manifestation of sacred – hierophany allows to define absolute "starting point", a certain "centre"... That's exactly why, the religious person is eager to dispose in "the Centre of the World". For living in the World it is necessary to create it, but no world can be born in chaos"⁸. Sacral centre – is the beginning of the universe's structuring, its creation from the endless and homogeneous chaos. So, in this way is created the unique look of people's culture, growing up from the cult of honouring "the place of development" – the cradle of the given nation.

The sacral centre, shown in the landscape, pierces through the time thickness and the levels of the universe, is the Fulcrum, radiating perfect constancy and giving birth in the existing world to confidence in its stability and integrity. At the same time the sacral centre attracts to itself surrounding social cultural space, showing the way to the spiritual unity and enlightenment. Symbolism of the sacral centre expresses itself in a definite totality of signs "the highest and absolute unsigned essence". As Y.M. Lotman defines itself, for the man who is in the space of sacral centre,

“the content irrationally twinkles through the expression and plays the role like a bridge from rational world to the mystic world”⁹. Sacral centre appears to be an invariant nucleus of culture, because “the sacral sphere is always more conservative than profane” (Y.M. Lotman), that’s why it gives stability to the cultural continuum, defining its principles of social organization, valuable structures: moral, mental, aesthetic.

Altai in this sense is a special region. N.K. Roerich noted that Altai is situated in “the middle of Asia”, “among four oceans”¹⁰ at the cross roads of great migrations and trade routes and it became a crucible in which the peoples and nations of Eurasia were being smelted. The nomads found shelters, rest and abundant food in its “secluded” valleys. But they were forced out by the new arriving tribes and they were splashed out on the spaces of Eurasia, carrying with themselves passionate impulse of a new social creation. And here during thousand years a sacral palimpsest¹¹ was being drawn up: some cultures gave way to other cultures, they carried out their economic and political activity, worshipped their forefathers and the Sky, the spirits of nature and at the same time held sacred the sacral centres of their predecessors. On the sacral territories of Altai, such as the plateau Ukok, the Valley of the river Yustyd, the Karakol Valley, it is seen, that sanctuaries and separate ritual objects of different epochs are situated near each other, not destroying the sanctuaries of the preceding cultures, and rather often vice versa, including them in later complexes.

The causes of “multilayering” of the sacral centres of Altai lie in somewhat wonderful inter ethnic complementarity, displaying in the given region, “containing” itself and reconciling in itself everybody, who gets here. Here one and the same landscapes are being sacralized by different people, intersecting both in synchrony and diachrony. Here settled farmers and nomads during several hundred years were weaving common four measured canvas of regional culture, where space and time were localized in their specific constants. In agrarian culture, the tradition as system forming factor was the dominant feature of development, forefathers’ experience was raised to the rank of absolute authority and on its base the process of historical development was taking place. The nomads lived in another spatial-temporal continuum, their real world consisted of inner

cycles according to which their animals lived and above them the infinite Eternal Skyspread. It overturned into endless steppe spaces, smoothly passing into cosy and safe inter mountain valleys, framing snow-white peaks of sacred summits. The non-homogeneous but favourable for a human Space, gave birth to binary perception of time, was being reflected in material daily world of regional culture, pierced by eternal conceptions of the world, cosmic existence.

Due to its varied cultural and natural phenomena, making up the integrity of Altai locus, it is considered as a common cultural landscape. Such type of landscape harmoniously combines natural and cultural heritage, creative phenomena of traditional and modern cultures. Essential aspects of the definition of such landscape are: its images and symbols as a special semiotic component, aesthetic and ethical aspects, sacral and synthetically-valuable, which is the result of co-creation of a man and nature. At the same time this systematic natural-cultural formation consists of the whole row of elements, making up this integrity, which got the definition "sacral centres".

Sacral centres of Altai may be referred to two types of cultural landscapes: (1) "developing landscape, which kept its active social role in that part of contemporary community, where ties with the traditional way of life are strong and in which the evolutionary process continues; at the same time it demonstrates considerable material evidences of its evolution in the course of time" (a bright example of such type is the Karakol valley) and (2) "associative cultural landscape; inclusion of such landscapes in the World Heritage Site is stipulated by the availability of very strong religious, artistic or cultural associations of the natural part of landscape..."¹². To this type may be referred "no-take Zone Ukok" with all its sacral and historical-cultural objects, "Katun Biosphere Reserve" with sacral centre of Belukha mountain. Both these territories are UNESCO World Heritage sites.

V.L. Kaganskiy in monograph *cultural landscape and Soviet inhabitable space* is actively developing the issues of cultural landscape, raising rather the serious problem of proportion of natural and cultural. Systematically researching the phenomenon of "cultural landscape", opening the

hermeneutics of Russian cultural landscape on post-Soviet space, the author fairly notices: “The proportion of natural and cultural components defines very many things in landscape, however it’s not often clear whether this or other event has natural or cultural origin. *We consider that certain landscape is natural almost always because we are indisposed to regard the culture of its native habitants respectfully. This culture doesn’t make it obligatory to be technological at all* (emphasis mine – I.Zh.), leads to rampant population’s growth and aggressive implementation of anthropogenic material elements to landscape”¹³.

Technogenic culture of our society hardly perceives exactly this type of cultural landscape. With special acuteness it is affected through the example of Altai’s sacral territories. The concept “sacral territories” is absent in the legislative framework of Russian Federation’s land tenure, aggressive business, unregulated tourism and importantly in the scientific archaeological excavations. Besides, there is the threat not only of disappearance of unique geographical spaces with rich biota, but of the destruction of the whole layer of native culture, consequences of which are difficult to imagine.

V.L. Kaganskiy looks at the reason of cultural landscapes’ destruction being the violation of “harmony of scales”. Moreover, different groups of population, in different scales perceive, live out and semantically use this living space. So, a long pending law suit of native population concerning gas pipeline to China through sacral territories of Karakol Valley and plateau Ukok, besides economic, political and ecological aspects shows the impropriety of laying the pipeline in those areas, where other “forces” take action. These forces transcend by their power according to absolute conviction of native people. These confirmations could be blamed on superstitions and semi-illiteracy of part of the population. But there was a time when A.F. Losev proved: “absolutely possessing equal rights value of faith and knowledge”¹⁴. And in this case, the faith of native population is based on its empirical knowledge about the structure of sacral territories, their roles and functions in the planet and the ways of human interaction with them.

Here it is possible to say about “holistic” and peculiar “environmental

friendliness” of the local people’s mentality, considering the scale of the significance of their (local) sacral territories in the whole-planet system and temporally directing into the future (the need to leave behind themselves the live planet to their descendants) as a counterbalance to momentary profits of state and business-structures.

Cultural landscape is structured by the significant locations, possessing basic semiotic senses. In sacral territories – these are cult complexes or separate sacral objects, which generate “geo-semiotic, mythological-geographical and image-geographical interpretations” according to D.N. Zamyatin, considering cultural landscape as one of the categories of humanitarian geography¹⁵. Confirming the significant richness of sacral (or significant) locations, D.N. Zamyatin at the same time reiterates that this significance is restricted “by force of natural restriction of religious community themselves”, [at the same place]. In Altai territory, on the contrary, *distinctness of significant locations (sacral centres) is in their polysemy, big number of layers, being out of confessionality. Showing through the depth of centuries, collecting semiotic senses, concentrating mythological-geographical space, significant locations provide modern inhabitants of Altai with their territorial and cultural identity.*

The conservation of traditional way in technogeneous civilization is perceived by Altaic ethnos as the way of self-identity and self protection. The features, which are defined by theorists of modernization as appropriate to traditional, “historically primary society”, are reserved in culture of Altaians till now: the community character of society; priority orientation on metaphysical, not instrumental values; dependence on religious or mythological presentations in organization of social life; authoritarian character of authority; the absence of deferred demand, that is ability to produce something in material sphere not for daily living needs, but for future; orientation more on world view knowledge than on science; predominance of local under universal in thinking and others. In conditions of modernization these kinds of features of traditionalism are under strong pressure and are met with a number of essential threats, such as: “conflictogenic strengthening of social inequality as the result of appearance of enclaves of modernity, copying of stereotypes, which are

already discarded by western civilization, break-up of traditional mechanisms of supporting the social order with impossibility of quick implementation of the new ones"¹⁶.

The appearance of many different social, cultural, ethnic and ideological problems among traditional cultures in conditions of entrance in post-modern space makes the formation of common values, difficult. Most importantly, these bring into question the universal character of modernization as the way of achievement of one civilizational form. Therefore, for forming the effective scenario of ethnic culture's development in the condition of post-modernism, it is necessary to take into consideration the key positions of self-identity of ethnos, based on traditional culture, that is by deep reverence and spiritualization of Nature, on connection of humans with the Earth and its sanctuaries.

At first glance the above mentioned features of traditionalism slow down the processes of integration into the global trend of scientific-technological progress. On the other hand there is a question: if there in traditional culture, certain system of values would be actual and in demand by post-modern civilization?

At the end of the second millennium, thinking about scientific paradigm of the future, prominent psychologist and psychiatrist of the 20th century, the founder of transpersonal psychology S. Grof in his fundamental work pointed out the necessities of meeting the newest natural-science discoveries with revelations of traditional culture in one informational space: "Comprehensive paradigm of future, which is able to perceive and synthesize all the variety of data of relativistic quantum physics, the theory of systems, researches of consciousness, neurophysiology, and also ancient eastern spiritual practice, shamanism, primordial rituals and healing practice, must include complimentary dichotomies in three different levels: cosmos, individual and human's brain"¹⁷. Given definition – is not simply the image-metaphor. Today in ecology, medicine, some fields of relativistic physics, not to mention humanitarian sciences, experience and spiritual knowledge of local people are becoming in demand more and more.

The greatest achievement of traditional cultures is their safeguarding

(in contradiction to civilized pressure) of harmonious relationships with nature. It is acknowledged and appreciated by the world community. And may be, exactly this fact will be taken as a basis of universal forms of interaction among different cultures of modern civilization. Meanwhile, in the conditions of transition to post-modern space of culture, exchange processes between Culture and Nature, to say the least, aren't balanced. And in spite of being in demand of teachings and conceptions of ecological and cosmic problematics from ancient eastern philosophy teachings to the teaching of "Living Ethics"; from Pythagoras to A. Einstein – ecological crisis deepens more, and processes of cultural construction are not rarely economically determined or followed by the way of tecnification. And again the humanity has to bring back to memory that Nature and Culture – are two sub-systems of existence, being independent, but at the same time being in indissoluble synergetic entity. Through the knowledge of Nature's laws, the humans came to understand the laws of existence and development of the Universe; realizing their universalism, and formed constant values of culture.

The development of society and humans are regulated by laws, which are common for the whole universe and therefore the absence of formation of spiritual values may lead to ecological crisis. On the other hand, it's impossible to exit from it, supporting only to ban or clear civilizational wastes: "It's clean not where people clear, but where they don't throw about." For building the future civilization into the cone of attraction it is necessary to form "pure" consciousness, pure souls of the future keepers of the planet.

Some regions of the planet and Russia in particular, possess potential possibilities for the transition to the civilization of a new type where appropriating and technogenic-transformation of the management of humans will be substituted by preservation and development. The main markers of such region are:

- profitable geographical and geopolitical situation;
- availability of strategic supplies of geological and biosphere resources;
- reserved biodiversity (availability of relics, endemics, Red Book

animals and plants);

- unspent recreational potential;
- rich historical-cultural heritage;
- traditions of the complementary coexistence of people and cultures;
- developed *models of noospheric strategy of regional development*, based on the synergy of development of human spiritual potential, ecological use of nature and steady development of society.

In the opinion of a number of scientists, Gorni Altai is the region with maximum concentration of noospheric resource: "Here the nature shows especially powerful potential of self-organization and self-restoration"¹⁸. Altai is perceived by these scientists not only as the region with rich deposits of ores and minerals, centres of biodiversity with high compaction of "live substance" and numerous geophysical anomalies; but this is a region where supreme laws of nature, interrelations of humans and the Universe, the region of high concentration of spiritual energy and its translation into time and space, are clearly shown.

Their primordial roots, which were put in the deep layers of the traditional culture of the native and old inhabitants play an essential role in the formation of noospheric consciousness of Altai region's people. Since ancient times in traditional culture of the inhabitants of Altai and composed forms of management, especially in every concrete locality, a wise creative activity, directed at the creation of harmonious social-natural complexes was being realized. At the same time, inter-communication of actions and thoughts of a man with the state of the environment, its sensitive reaction on the human's activity was also realized. Such activity, noospheric by its nature, is preserved now in the tenor of life of the native inhabitants of Altai. Above mentioned factors promote wise governance and co-development of human, society and nature, under which vital demands of population are being satisfactorily realized without causing damage to the interests of the future generations.

The presence of noospheric resource puts before the inhabitants of Altai a high plank of responsibility for its preservation and development, which is the guarantee of the revival of Russia and preservation of the planet as a whole. Noospheric conception of the civilized development

supposed qualitatively different gaze at scientific-technical progress, which is not the aim but means of achieving the harmonious relations of humans with nature. Thus the human will spend his main strength and energy not for survival, but on the revealing of his creative and spiritual potential.

The key role in the formation of a new type of civilization must play another form of power—hagiocracy (“the power of sanctuaries”). P.I. Novgorodtsev defined it as: “For the creation of new Russia, it is necessary to have new spiritual forces, the souls cheering up to the new light”¹⁹. For the rebirth of Russia it is necessary not to look at the European economic and social conceptions, which (as we had to convince many times) don’t work under the conditions of Russian reality. Today we understand the necessity of restoring the lost years of unbelief and enmity toward God, ties of people’s spirit with *his* sanctuaries. The Special Way of Russia is stipulated by its special geographical location – “the country-continent”; **its** inescapable inclination to Light and reverence of the sanctuaries; **its** special people – multi-ethnic, multi-cultural and multi-religious. Exactly this unity in diversity and the spiritual pivot, which is difficult to swing, provide Russia with steadiness in any tragic and hopeless historical collisions.

After eighty years of the dusk of militant atheism and vulgar positivism, came enlightenment and repentance, which is evidenced by the restoration of temples, revival of religious sanctuaries, people reverting to their religious sources. The sanctuaries for the people of Russia are honouring of Mother Land and Woman-Mother; heavenly laws of the world order, State, and father as a guarantor of the stability of a family. The steadiness of the society is based on the laws of natural conformity. Contemporaneity gives rather many examples to the following: the sources of the crisis of Western culture and civilization are founded in their constant aspiration for the creation of material world and alienation from nature, which led to dissemination of (explosive spreading, “leading to generalization of pathological processes”) of extreme anti-natural forms of existence: same-sex marriages, juvenile justice, the propaganda of violence, sexual perversions and others. And again, the words of P.I. Novgorodtsev sound very contemporary: “That’s why now we put

theonomic moral in the place of autonomous moral; and hagiocracy, the power of sanctuaries in the place of democracy, the power of people. We'll be saved not by any all-curing forms, but by beneficial enlightenment of souls"²⁰.

Working out of the global scenario of building up new civilized relations of the noospheric type, capable to reorganize (eventually) the whole planet, which is now dipping in the global ecological and spiritual crisis, at first is possible in certain select territories possessing the noospheric resource, which are numerous in Russia (Altai, Baikal, the North, Caucasus, Ural, Crimea and others). In Altai, as in a model territory, ideological field of noospheric civilization begins to build. So, in the year 2000, an international conference in Gorni Altai, devoted to ecological and social problems of Altai and Sayans region, passed the "Spiritual-Ecological Charter of Altai and Sayans Region", setting world view benchmarks and strategic purposes of establishment of the noospheric model of civilization in 21st century. It defined the effective criteria of any regional activity's assessment, based the point of bifurcation of the new process of self-organization. For the past quarter of a century, nature protection activity has been actively developing: the number of especially valuable landscapes are admitted as UNESCO sites/objects; 22% of the region's territory is the specially protected natural sites (wildlife reserves, nature parks, nature reserves); the big amount of the projects of United Nations Development Programme, Global Environmental Fund, WWF and others. Alternative (renewable) types of energy; ecological, noospheric and pilgrimage types of tourism are being developed.

From 2006, on the territory of Republic of Altai (Ongudai district) the chain of schools choosing the cultural-creative model as a strategy of their development began to be built (the author of this research is the scientific advisor of federal experiment, being realized in Ongudai district)²¹. The key idea of the experiment is the formation among pupils of spiritual-ecological world view, education among young people the feeling of identity to their own culture and its values, careful attitude to natural and cultural heritage of the nationalities of Altai, Russia and the world. The pupils acquire the knowledge of spiritual, ethical and aesthetic

values of their own nation in cultural-creative – transformative, socially-oriented, nature protection activities and so on. They acquire together with traditional forms of nature management and crafts, modern environment-friendly technologies. This lets new keepers and assiduous masters of their own home ground and the planet on the whole, possessed by noospheric consciousness and having modern nature-aligned technologies²².

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ORIGIN OF THE NAME OF ALTAI

A.A. POZNYAKOV AND O.P. RESHETOVA

Golden and silver hand bell rings over Altai
(OLD TURKIC METAPHOR)

ABSTRACT

The article tells about the etymology of the word Altai. It is a magic word, the meaning of which has never been revealed before. When studying the name "Altai", the researchers paid little attention to the local segments of the Turkic-speaking tribes of Altai. The spiritual life of Altaians is reflected not only in religious beliefs, but also in poetry, in the traditions of storytellers, Altai Kaichi. It would be right to recognize the etymology of the "Sacral Earth" in the term "Altai". We get a new image connecting two runic images: AL TAI (Altai), that is, a stone limit and, at the same time, a high top, a top of spirit, the first principle and the limit of everything.

Keywords: Golden Altai, meaning, etymology, sacral, spiritual life, language development.

Today the word "Altai" is perceived as a geographical toponym and nothing more. At all times, the peoples of this mountain region speaking different languages pronounced the word "Altai" with reverence. Indeed, it is a magic word, the meaning of which has never been revealed before. The sacral content of the word is lost. The sacral-touching attitude towards everything that is hidden within this word, or more precisely, within the mountain country, which bears the name of Altai, has also been lost. The ancient Turks called Altai the Sacral Earth.

G.N. Potanin in the essay "Altai" wrote: "According to Radlov the name Altai, can be interpreted differently; it can come from the word Alatur, which means "golden mountains", it can also come from Alintau – "motley mountains" or Al-taiga, "high lying forest", and finally

“Alty-ai” – “six months”¹. We think that the first interpretation is the most probable one, the Chinese name of Altai is Ging – shan, which also means the “golden mountains”.

Gold received its name by the Sun or by the Moon, the essence of which is the same. The symbolism of colors is associated with the Sun and the Moon. The yellow color is the color of gold, and white color is the color of silver. Both gold and silver referred to the designation of sky lights. These metals were assigned properties belonging to light and fire. The color of gold and the light of Sun do not mean identification with them. Gold is a symbol of Sun. The land was called gold because it gave life to everything alive and brought material benefits, so the metaphor was taken as a top name.

When studying the name of “Altai,” the researchers paid little attention to the local segments of the Turkic-speaking tribes of Altai. They were the guardians of the best and richest funds of public consciousness. People’s memory protects something much more ancient and significant. “The land where people of the same kind lived was formally considered patrimonial property. The patrimonial territory included pastures and woodlands, parts of stables. Wooden or felt yurts, cattle bins, economic buildings were on this land. Great-grandfathers, fathers were born and died here. Such a small Altai was the true Homeland, the Universe”². When the story says that the Bogatyr breaks up with “his Altai”, it means that he leaves his patrimonial land. He makes feats for his Homeland, a wise Khan cared for the well-being of his people. Every generation, in its possession, sacrificed patrimonial mountains, and this place was considered to be a sacral one.

In addition to the patrimonial mountains, many mountains were considered to be sacral mountains in mountainous Altai. A special place was occupied by Uch-Suru, Iik-tu, Babyrgan, Abygan, which had the common name *diaik-tu*, meaning “venerated mountains”, “sacral mountains”. These mountains are places of good spirits, intermediaries between people and Ulgen (heavenly deity). For a supernatural feature, humans treated these mountains with superstitious respect or fear, perceiving them as center of the land.

The spiritual life of the Altaians is reflected not only in religious beliefs, but also in poetry, in the traditions of storytellers, in Altai *Kaichi*. The concepts “Altai,” altyn, “altaiga” are never mixed in their texts. Each word played an independent role in a fairy tale, a legend, and in usual informal conversation. The word “altyn” in Turkic and “altan” in Mongolian refers to not only “gold,” but in some cases as “royal”. Khan-Balyke, the one man who joined the royal throne, was titled “Altan.” In Altai fairy tales, Altan is an old, wise man who is approached for advice as a father (or even a spirit).

The outstanding Russian ethnographer of the 19th century and the collector of fairy tales A.N. Afanasyev argued: “The difficulty of forming names and verbs with distracted meaning, which man experienced in the era of language creativity, forced him to express about many phenomena of nature metaphorically. All the light gods were given gold and silver attributes by a man, because these gods lived in heaven and represented their own light - the Sun and the Moon”³. With the concept of “gold,” people associated all the cleanest and brightest, so the word “altyn” contained another meaning - “clarity.” The Altai epic *Maadai-Kara* says: *Maadai-Kara* lifted the opponent under the third sky: *Uch ajask altyn*, literally meaning “under three clarities”.

In the eternal struggle of good and evil, the good beginning is golden, evil is dark as iron. Thus, Ulgen’s possessions are on Mount Altyn-tu and all the objects around him are made of gold, whereas Erlik’s (evil beginning) possessions are underground in a dark, wet place and all his objects look black like soot made of iron. In the poetic tales of the Altaians, every mountain, every lake, river, and rock have a golden gate, a golden palace, a golden cone. They called it golden-silver to give greater importance to a particular object or place. “The son of Altai-Buchai went round his golden-silver Altai, (Altai) to live safely. He went round the golden-silver taiga”.

Two metals, gold and silver, “altyn” and “kumysh” in Altai were sharply released from a number of other metals, causing such an epic combination, which was also often repeated, as a combination of the sun and moon.

Altai poetry distinguishes between seven Altai, they are white, blue,

yellow, gold, silver, dark blue and black. Three, nine or even forty Altai are sometimes mentioned at once. Therefore, the hero of the poetic legend was asked: "What Altai are you from?" or: "Which Altai do you want to go to?" And if you go on golden-silver Altai, it does not mean to go on the metal, it means to go to the most holy land.

First of all, Altai is a part of territory, land, country, homeland in the representations of the Altaians themselves. The land is called Altai even in Erlik's dark "kingdom".

Let us give several expressions from epic stories:

1. "The earth Altai began to sway".
2. "Examine the Altai circle, examine the land circle."
3. "Kys-Mergen said he would live in Altai of Altyn Khan."
4. "Why doesn't the horse go missing, he's not gold, is he? Why doesn't your husband die? Is he eternal? The horse does not choose Altai (place) where to die and the husband does not choose the land where to die. "
5. "What's your name, what's your way? Which Altai did you come from?"

Telengits (one of the indigenous peoples of Altai) threw the eyes of the killed animals into the taiga, saying that "Altai" would give these eyes to another animal. There are a large number of gold stones "altyn-tash," gold mountains "altyn-tu," gold lakes "altyn-kıl," in Altai. These are the names of fabulous Bogatyrs of Altai poetry; "Altyn-Tash" is the son of the Earth; "Altyn-Toji" is the child of the Heavenly King; Altyn-Kaan and his daughter Altyn-Chachan. The horse of Altyn-Kaana is named Ak-Sarah (translation from Altai "White-Yellow") with golden wool at the gold hitching post, etc.

Some scientists and travellers noted that the inhabitants of Altai did not relate to the name of their land with the concept of "golden". On the contrary, the word Altai meant mountain country, alpine meadows, native mountain nomads.

Other researchers interpret the evidence of Byzantine ambassadors and historians, claiming that Altai was called the chain of Golden

Mountains before 6th century. It was due to the ancient custom of Mongolian and Turkic Khans to give honorary titles to their places of stay and mountains located in their nearest neighborhood. Since the 12th century, the Khans of the Kin Empire had accepted the high title of "Altyn-khans", Golden Princes; and the high peaks, at the foot of which they arranged their yard or Han place, inevitably became golden mountains and objects of high veneration. Thus, ridges completely deprived of metal wealth became golden mountains.

The honorary title of the Kidan Liao dynasty means "steel," the name of the Zhurzhen Czin dynasty is "gold". The people, which the Chinese had known under the name *dada*, who successfully fought the Czins, gave their dynasty the name of Mangu, which means "silver." However, the meaning of the words Liao and Czin was quite different and borrowed from the names of the rivers on which the main stables of the *kidans* and *zhurzhen*s were located.

The root "Alt" is often found among the toponyms and hydronyms of Altai. There is a mountain range Altyn-tag, which in translation from the north Altai means "Golden Mountains". Altyn-goal means "Golden River" where gold was dug. Since ancient times, gold had predominantly been poured from river deposits. The Naiman Prince Tayang Khan gathered an army of Merkits, Oirats and Dzungars to fight against Genghis Khan on the banks of the Altai river.

It seems obvious that the terms "Altai" and "Altyn" cannot be identical. The author of this article repeatedly had to ask the same question: "What does the name of Altai mean?" All responses were as follows:

1. "Altai" is an old word. Everyone usually says, "Altai is my region. I must protect my spirits, protect my region". *Altai, oskyung jerim* – "the land where I grew up".
2. "Altai is a light, other side, other place, a country, a land. If a person has gone hunting and does not return for a long time, relatives begin to worry and then say: "Kaji Altaida is waiting". The word "Altai" is used in speech only by old people.
3. "Altai is a place where I live, where I was born, it is a native land,

a native country, Homeland. If a person leaves for a long time or returns from far away, they say: *Kairan Altaini* – “My homeland”. “Kairan” - “It is a pity to leave you, my Native land”.

4. “Altai is our Homeland. Altai - Altai - all around mine. Altai is a native place, I came to this place, my land. Altai won’t leave me hungry. The word is not spoken loudly”.
5. “We worshiped Altai and our ancestors as well”.
6. “Altai is the whole land. Altai is the custom of worshipping nature. I was born here and worshipped nature. This is my natural land, my home place”.

Thus, old times open not only in the works of old writing, it still sounds in free, oral speech of the inhabitants of Altai. We are trying to draw attention to the lost facts. All researchers regard the origin of toponyms, from purely materialistic positions, missing the deep layer of the peoples who inhabited Central Asia and in general the ancient inhabitants of the planet, who lived long before the historical time. One needs to pay attention to the existence of all peoples of the original cosmological roots in their spoken speech and then in writing.

However, the same word sounds in different languages and its semantics and etymology are very important. Semantics is a section of linguistics that studies the meaning of words. The polysemantic approach to the study of the name “Altai” allows to reveal the meaning of the ancient root “Al”. It acts primarily as the basis of a number of tribal names and the inextricably related names of totems, gods, and, as a consequence, the names of the places of residence of these tribes. “Al” is a spirit, the spirit of the earth, mountains, the river, the place, a sort, the breeding name, a totem, a tamga.

In toponyms, the semantic nucleus of “Al” is found in oronyms: “Al-pl-s” - “Alps,” and “Al pen-nin-us” - “Apennines”. In the gidronyms, the name of Altai river contains the root “al”, meaning “water,” river. “The ancient Schumer written language retained from the whole word *hal* (water) only its announcement “a”, losing, without trace the root consonants.

The myths of most peoples claim that the universe is created from

the ocean. Those myths should be considered as the most archaic in which water appears as the source of a space element. The sky is a careless sea for ancient peoples. World waters are around the earth, under the earth and in the sky. *Talai* means "sea," *dalai* means ocean in Altai.

"Sea", "earth" and "heaven" were originally marked with one single word – "Heaven". Heaven was perceived as the unity of three heavens. "Sky and water" were perceived in three planes, the upper, the lower and underworld, which later led one to understand these three worlds. The upper is "sky," the middle is "earth" and the lower is "water" or "sea."

According to the category of objects, words that gradually arose for the first time in the process of development are divided into cosmic ("sky", "earth", "sea"), microcosmic (body parts – "hand", "eye", "head", etc.), economic, social, etc. Paleolinguistics consider the root of "Al" in three aspects: al-t-an – "hand"; al-to – "party"/"country"; al-t-av at Basques "al" retains the meaning of "power." And in *al-t-ai* we find the root *al* meaning "to take, to accept"; "space (place)"; "the party, before, forward", "bottom, below, down" in the dictionaries of Old Turkic language. "Power" subsequently proceeds to the notion of "hand".

In the much later stage of language development, the category "sky" as "god", the meanings of "faith", "oath" related functionally to "heaven god", "lord" were formed. Both ritual servants and cult objects were called as a "priest", "sorcerer", "Altar", "throne", "ritual", etc.

Astronomy was preceded by astrology, which means "star-word" or "sky-word". From archaic times "God" is originally "heaven", hence "theology" is the same as "sky-word". One of the oldest Semitic words that meant God, was the word "El", which was used in the name of many deities such as El-Shaddai or El-ohim. When ancient Jewish authors included Osiris in their myths, they called him El-Azar – God Osiris. The word Elohim is used in the Old Testament to refer to the Lord, but this word has the plural and means "shining".

The Schumer word "El" means "bright" or "shining"; Old Irish "Ailil" means "shining"; Old Croatian "El", "elf" means "shining". "Illa" Inca means "bright" or "shine", Babylonian "Ella" means "shine", all these

names are related etymologically. In this regard, the words of Socrates are, "In each of us the Sun, but do not interfere with shining".

The Arabic Al-Lah (the highest name of God) grammatically refers to the male genus, whereas another concept, *al-dhat*, which means the divine and incomprehensible essence of God, has a female genus.

The name of "chemistry" and its predecessor, "alchemy", came from the two Arab-Egyptian roots "Al" (El) and "kimia". "Al" is a certain article, "kimia" is a secret, hidden, hence occult. Alchemy, or rather *Al-kimia* (chemistry), as a system of secret knowledge, originated in the environment of Kim-Arab mystics. According to ancient records, alchemy (*Al-Kimia* or *Elohim*) and astronomy were considered to be the higher sciences. In ancient times, there was a single knowledge and a single language.

Thus, before using the term, it should be properly understood. The concept of "God" is expressed by the number one. One is the number of Truth. Truth is God. The letter "A" also means "one". Unit (1) is the numeric value of "A". "A" is a symbol of Unity and the immutable idea of Divinity. The sacred letter comes first. Exactly it begins the alphabets of almost all peoples of the world: Alpha (Greek), Alef (Jewish), Az (Slavic), A (Latin), etc. The letter "Alef" means the original primary unity.

Pythagoras said: "The first was Unit!" And then: "Point will give birth to the Line, and the First Number for the human world will appear. This one will be the first unit. Everything is a Single Number coming from a Non-Number. Non-Number symbol is a Circle, Ring, Zero. At the heart of the Universe is the Number. Everything can be measured by Number, everything can be created by him". "God created all by measure and number". But measure and number is harmony and rhythm, that is, what beauty is created from. The Greeks called Harmony the Universe, the Cosmos.

Alima in Sanskrit means the "first person". "Altan" of the Altaians means "an old, a wise man"; and "Altan" ("Altun") is "the spirit of the earth". "Aldar!" is a ritual exclamation of the Mongols. In Altai mythology, Algen (Ulgen is a heavenly deity) and Alrik (Erlik is a god of the underworld) was originally one person and his name originates from a single root Al, but in some mystical way, a single one is divided into two

ones, and the inherent ambivalence of one, acquires an independent character (essence) in the behavior of already two brothers-deities.

This suggests that the ancients had a clear idea of power, as an energy that shows itself ambivalently. Since any energy has both positive and negative charge, the role of these charges was represented by mythological names. They were also aware that the forces that affect our physical life are the essence of vibration. It can be concluded that every ancient cosmogony contains a substrata of esoteric truth. Mythical names tell us about the creation of the universe.

It is represented to us:

Altai is a Heaven (God), middle Heaven (earth), spirit of the earth (Altan).

Altai is a totemic mythological deity. Hence the name of the people themselves (*Altai-kiji* - people of Altai).

Altai is a tribal name put aside in the toponymic term.

Altai is a place (land), side (country), peace, Homeland.

Altai is the Model of the Universe.

Altai is a "Sacred Earth" as it was called by the ancient Turks.

The term *tai* remained the most mysterious for researchers and there is no reasonable explanation. In our opinion, the syllable *tai* is a determinative, determining its belonging to the land. The roots of Turkic words were one-layered. Subsequently, there was a fusion of stable phrases into words, where the primary words began to serve as syllables. The same syllable could have many different meanings. All words that indicated something related to the land were marked with a *tai* sign. This sign could also be a metaphorical expression symbolizing the connection to earth.

According to the legend of the Altaians, the mythical Bogatyr Sartakpai (Mongolian- Sartaktai) came off the sky along with rain, thunder and lightning, he was the son of the sky, who "walked on a line of earth arranged peoples and states", laid roads, dug canals, filled lakes with water, filled mountains, moved bridges across rivers⁴.

N.A. Aristov pointed out, that the word *tai* could mean a "place," land, "country," and subsequently turned to a syllable of collective

significance ⁵. The Korean language belongs to the Altaic family of languages, which includes all Turkic (including Altaic), Mongolian, Samoyed, Tungus-Manchurian and other languages. In Korean language there are several words with the meaning "land", and one of them is native Korean *tan* (at the end of the rear-lingual nose N). If we attach the end of the Nominative case "I" to this word, we will get two syllables: "ta+i," at the same time the rear-tongue nasal N will fall out, as it cannot be at the beginning of the syllable (here the second). And we will get this word with the meaning: land, earth, arable field, site, territory, soil, etc. From the *Experience of the Russian-Korean Dictionary*, compiled by M.P. Puzillo, we read: "An Earth is flocks, "hundred." In this word "c" is barely pronounced, as if "t" (*ttai*) stands instead of 'c'"⁶.

L.P. Potapov, the researcher of Altai, says: "The Altai shamanists did not have only one name, (the word *Jar-su*) designating the main earth deity. I was convinced repeatedly by this fact, what Anohin wrote that the Altaians called the spirits of the land as *Jar-su* (letters "land-water") or altai. Consequently, the word Jap-su and altai acted as synonyms. According to the materials collected by me, Altai as the name of the earthly deity was attached to the deity of the entire territory of mountain Altai as a whole, with its ridges and forests, rivers and valleys.

This name then acted in the vocabulary of the Kams as a negative name, as a geographical appellative with the meaning "mountain". "But not just a mountain, but an ancestral mountain, sacred, sacral patroness.... In heroic stories, this word means the place of birth and place of residence of the Bogatyr with all the surrounding nature. The name Altai could replace the generic name of the host spirits of the area. It is probable that the idea of the owner of Altai also occurs in the epos (*Altai eezi*). The deity of Altai is called as the owner"⁷.

In our opinion, it would be right to recognize the etymology of "Sacral Earth" in the term of "Altai", as it was called by the ancient Turks. Another source of our research is the Turkic runes. Runic writing was originally a secret (sacral) knowledge available only to the dedicated men. We have reached only fragments of information, on the basis of which runologists are trying to reconstruct the runic system. The runes are signs cut on a

tree, bone or stone with a magical power. The runes had strength, and the process of cutting them out mobilized these forces and awakened them to life.

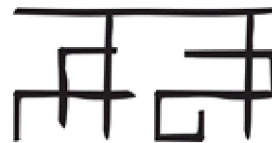
In order to understand the deep meaning of runic writing, it is necessary to master not the combination of letters, but the connection of images. An image is understood as a holistic knowledge that combines many aspects. The rune "AL" contains an image of fullness and integrity, density, as a stone, which is all in itself "sobr-AL" ("collected"), as the First Stone ALatyr from which the creation of the whole earth began (in Slavonic mythology). The last month of summer is called Tailer by the Russian people of old belief. The rune "TAI" means "vertex", "finish", "limit". We get a new image connecting two runic images: AL – TAI (Altai), that is, a stone limit and, at the same time, a high top, a top of spirit, the first principle and the limit of everything. So new meanings are generated, they multiply, responding to the call of speech and thought.



AL



TAI



ALTAI

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SPRITUAL DOCTRINE OF THE PEOPLES OF ALTAI

I.A. ZHERNOSENKO AND O.I. PROMINSKAYA

ABSTRACT

The article seeks to reveal the historical background of the emerging multi-confessional situation in the Altai Republic, which at the turn of the millennium caused intense disputes over the search for national identity. The authors trace the development of processes of transformation of the original spiritual doctrine of the indigenous inhabitants of Altai - Tengrianism; substantiate the deep inter-connection of Tengrianism with the spiritual practices of shamanism; dissect the origins of the complementarity of the indigenous population of Altai with alien world religions, revealing the common concepts and the causes of transformation. The authors see the reason for the viability of the spiritual doctrine of the indigenous inhabitants of Altai in the ability to build a constructive dialogue between the autochthonous and the alien population, inherent in the Slavic and Turkic ethnic groups. The authors underline the nature of multi-confessional dialogue as the basis for sustainable development of the culture of the peoples of Altai.

Keywords: shamanism, Tengrianism, Buddhism, Burkhanism, Orthodoxy, Old Believers, interfaith dialogue.

The twentieth century has become a zone of enhanced cultural contacts, a transitional period to a new post-industrial society, in which integration trends are everywhere observed, marking the direction of human development towards gaining the integrity lost during the development of civilization. Under the current conditions, modern times demand for reconsideration of many familiar norms: information technology and various means of communication erase the usual national, socio-cultural, economic and other boundaries. Traditional cultures are rapidly getting involved into integration processes and are at the crossroads: preserving

national cultural identity (but this is threatened by isolationism and blackout both at the material and metaphysical levels) or social progress (but its price is the destruction of the traditional way of life, and as a result: loss of cultural identity). Therefore, more than ever, in the Altai Republic the question arose about the spiritual basis of modern society, about an idea capable of consolidating the people. At all times, religion (or ideology) has been the binding element on which the state system rested. And the more this idea was consonant with the mental disposition of the people, the more solid and stable the state was.

For millennia, Altai has been a zone of enhanced contacts between different tribes and peoples, acting as a geographical and historical crossroad. It was here, as in the pod, the spiritual accumulations of many nations were melted: both those that inhabited it, and those that passed through it: some with commercial paths, and some with the path of war. It is here, in the territory of Altai, the pagan beliefs of the Altai converged with two world religions: Buddhism and Christianity.

Buddhism, which came here in two ways (with the Altai lama Boor and with the lamas of the Mongol conquerors) took root in Altai for 200 years, incorporating elements of “white shamanism”, created a peculiar form of the Altai spiritual doctrine, called *Ak Jang* or *Burhanism*.

Christianity is represented here by two branches: Orthodoxy and Old Believers. Orthodoxy came to Altai with the opening in the mid-19th century of the Altai Spiritual Mission, which laid the foundation for the cultivation of a new Altai intelligentsia. The religious and ascetic practice of the Old Believers, who came to Altai in search of *Belovodye* (White Water Land), also played a significant role in the formation of the spiritual culture of the region.

So what is the national idea of Altai? Today in public circles there is a heated debate about its definition, initiated by the Altai intelligentsia. And a seemingly good goal leads to serious clashes, often turning into a confrontation: representatives of traditional pagan beliefs reject not only Buddhism and Christianity as newcomers, and therefore alien cultures, but also *Ak Jang* as a kind of substitute and modern replica. Representatives of the *Ak Jang* movement themselves call the White Faith an indigenous,

inherently owned by Altai culture. Buddhists and Christians see in these world monotheistic religions, uniting many millions of people on the planet, an effective tool that can finally unite the long-suffering Altai people, which have been desperately trying to restore their integrity and former glory of the cradle of the Turks.

What is the reason for this seemingly intractable situation? In our opinion, this is the absence of a constructive dialogue between representatives of all faiths that exist in Altai. And the main reason for the recurrent disputes is the deep fear of losing one's identity. But the paradox is that in order for dialogue to take place there is no need to give up one's beliefs and values. One of the essential conditions for dialogue is the diversity of its participants. According to the law of requisite variety, formulated by W. Ashby in cybernetics, "the absence or insufficiency of diversity may indicate the breaching of the integrity of the subsystems, constituting this system"¹. That means that any living system (which is both the Altai people and their culture) remains stable for internal and external disturbances, only when it has sufficient degree of diversity adequate to balance the external influence directed at it.

Altai people have rich history, filled with turbulent events, outstanding personalities and their deeds. And in the process of building today's dialogue, we must not only forget about this, but, on the contrary, we need to understand the nuances and implications of accomplished acts, to realize their cultural and historical meanings. And this whole story is permeated with deep spiritual experiences and complex processes of crystallization of the spiritual matrix of the people.

At all times, in an attempt to comprehend the laws of the world order, a man realized that there is a higher power governing these laws. Real human observations of the world around us, intuitive sensations and emotional experiences from communicating with the forces of nature - all this gradually developed into a certain system of knowledge, which can be defined as Myth. Being an alloy of innermost knowledge about the world, the cosmos, about man himself, presented in a figurative, metaphorical form, where fiction and reality, artistry and history are interspersed, myths to this day have retained their relevance. They are

inseparable unity represented by poetry and philosophy, religion and ethics of the people.

The mythology of the indigenous population of Altai has a harmonious structure, which is a holistic, coherent belief system. Already in the early runic inscriptions left by the ancient Turks on the Orkhon River in Mongolia, such deities are mentioned as: *Tengri* (heaven), *Yer-Su* (spirits of earth and water), *Umai* (patroness of the hearth and fertility).

Scientists believe that faith in the Blue Sky of Tengri arose long before the first Eurasian nomadic empire, the Turkic Khanate, developed. Tengri is the Highest Cosmic Power, unable to be created and indestructible. Different peoples in their myths speak of this power: the ancient Egyptians called it Atum, the ancient Indians - Brahman, the ancient Jews - Elohim, the ancient Slavs - Rod, the ancient Chinese - Tien. All these peoples possess the Highest Knowledge that Tengri, Atum, Brahman, Tien had - these are the names of the One Higher Cosmic Power, which created the whole world and is its foundation. And all other gods and spirits of natural elements are numerous facets that reflect the greatness and wisdom of the Higher Power.

Tengri is not a personified deity, but the law of the world order. It controls the fates of outer space, the state, the people and the individual. Pre-Turk tribes revered it as the "Eternal Blue Sky" – "Kok-Tengri". In almost unchanged form, this cult also appears in medieval Mongols (*Monkhe-Tengri*). Later, the image of a single benevolent, all-knowing, judicial divine Heaven (*Tengri*) was preserved to the greatest extent among the Altai, Khakass and Mongols. But gradually, deep Vedic knowledge of Tengri begins to break up into individual religious cults. First, the name *Tengri* began to be attached to the supreme deity living in heaven. That is, the Sky is no longer comprehended as the Cosmos itself and the law of the world order, but only as the residence of a heavenly deity. Now it is called Tengri-khan - it was thought to be of enormous size, which reflected its cosmic scale, and the title *Khan* indicated a dominant position - in the Universe or in the pantheon of gods. And then the word *Tengri* became a household word and began to mean God in general (for example, in Buddhist, Manichean, Muslim texts).

So there was a breakdown of primary monotheism into polytheistic religious systems, and the term *Tengri* was assigned to the category of heavenly gods. The place of the supreme god in shamanistic mythology among the Turks and, especially, among the Mongols was taken by other characters: Ulgen, Khormusta.

This raises the logical question: what is shamanism? Some researchers, and the residents of Altai themselves, consider it as an ancient, and therefore, a primitive form of religion. This opinion, at least, is incorrect. At all stages of the history of the inhabitants of Altai from ancient to present times, regardless of the consolidation of alien world and national religions here, shamanism permeates all aspects of Altai people's life.

A key figure in shamanism, as in any mythological and religious system, is the mediator, which carries out the connection between the Heaven and the Earth (the world of people). In Altai, such people are called *kam*. This is not a sacrificer or a priest as a minister of worship, preserving its dogma and controlling proper rituals. Altai *kam* (like his "fellow men" among other Turkic peoples: *hahm* among Tuvans and Khakasses, *saman* from Evenki, *sening* from Kets, *bo* from Buryats, *oyuun* from Yakuts, *tadeby* from Nenets, *nga* from Nganasan, etc.) - this is a nomadic mediator, making the Way (*Jol*), depending on need, either to Heaven or to the Underworld. The main purpose of *kam* is not to serve the deity, but to receive from it a certain specific grace for people (birth of a child, return of lost health, search for lost cattle, etc.). That is, *kam* (in modern terminology - a *shaman*) is a rationally acting mediator whose ritual practices are based on empirical experience. For *kam*, all three worlds, living according to their own laws and requiring respect for these laws, are absolutely real².

Shamanism as a system of interaction with the universe has developed certain conditions for sustainable living in the natural environment. Its laws and regulations were taken from observations of natural forces that are the same throughout the planet. Therefore, unlike modern world and national religions, shamanism does not have generally accepted dogma (rules), and as a result of this, there is no potential for disputes, different interpretations of dogmatics. Shamanism does not have written holy books

(such as the Bible among the Jews, the Rig Veda among the Indians, the Tibetan Book of the Dead, etc.), but the knowledge of shamans about the world order is universal: it corresponds and does not contradict these sacred texts. Largely, shamanism is a “technology” (practice) of human interaction with the Universe. In their conclusions, authors of this study agree with the statement of I.S. Urabanaeva that shamanism “is a manifestation of universal esoteric philosophy and emerging on its basis distinctive spiritual practice of exploration of the hyperphysical reality - the sphere of transcendental reality that exists “on the other side” of everyday human experience... and the shaman is primarily a **practitioner** (emphasized by I. Zhernosenko), mastering the world of the beyond, while insuring himself with the help of knowledge gained through a definite line of spiritual continuity...”³. These “technologies” were the basis of all the ancient Vedic systems, which include Tengrianism. Shamans of different nations interact with the forces of Nature according to a single principle, but the forms of rituals can be very different. The only rule is faith in natural life and its spirits. And the way: how to find a common language with them will be special for each person. With the onset of each new day, the “rules” of communication with the spirits of nature change, since every day their “mood” can change in the same way as it can change of an ordinary human. Because everything around has changed: in one day the planet Earth and the Sun have moved in space, the situations around us in society and in nature have changed. And all this is energy, and it affects both the state of man and the “well-being” of Nature. Therefore, the rules-dogma given once and for all in shamanism are impossible. Every time one has to start again. It is important to act here and now! A shamanic action is a resonant state of one’s own inner universe with a large Universe taken at a particular time. There will never be such a state again. Such an action requires a person to have a high state of mind, inner focus and responsibility. The law is not established from outside, it is present here and now as an axiological principle, like the Eye of Tengri. The internal law is “woven” into the law of the universe⁴.

In true shamanism, there is no contrast between white and black. There is no evaluation of the good and the bad. There is only functional

significance in everything. The division of shamans into two categories: black and white, and more than that, endowing them with evaluative characteristics is the result of a rather late dualistic worldview, which entered the mentality of nomads with world religions.

Following the end of the Turkic Khanate and subsequent waves of the Mongol intervention, the harmonious spiritual concept of the ancient inhabitants of Altai was gradually destroyed. Religious beliefs disintegrated into their component parts, turning into many small religious cults. But the memory of the past spiritual unity lived in the subconscious of the people, resulting in the borrowing of monotheistic cults and building their own concept on their basis. This happened with Buddhism and Burkhanism, as well as with Orthodoxy.

The rather complicated relationship with Dzungaria in the 16th-18th centuries, which led to the conquest of part of the territory of modern Mongolian, Russian, and Kazakh Altai, had a strong influence of Lamaism (the Mongol-Tibetan Buddhism on the original beliefs of the indigenous people). In the first half of the 17th century, attempts were made by the Dzungar rulers to forcibly introduce the “yellow faith” (Lamaism) in the “Kan-Karakol country” located in the territory of modern Ongudai (where the sacred Karakol valley is located) and the Ust-Kan regions of the Altai Republic. This land, in particular the Western Altai mountain steppes (Kanskaya, Tenginskaya) for a long time was part of Dzungaria, where Lamaism was adopted already in 1616 AD, and it had begun to penetrate there much earlier. In the 19th century, the Kan-Karakol land became the core of the Altai-Kizhi people.

The flight of the Dzungars after the defeat of the Khanate and their settlement on the territory of their former tributaries and allies, the Kan-Karakols played a well-known role in consolidating Lamaism. Set in the 17th-18th centuries into the local religious soil, Lamaism was not fully accepted, but gradually, in the process of cultural interaction of the Kan-Karakol and Dzungars, Lamaism was no longer perceived as something foreign, and it adapted to the local religious environment. Being initially “alien” and imposed by alien Dzungars, 150 years after the fall of the Dzungar Khanate, Lamaism of Oirat (as the Altaians called the Dzungar)

origin began to be perceived already as part of its own Altai culture. The first Altai Lama Boor played a key role in this process.

In the eighteenth century, the leader of the Soyok Maimans (one of the clans of the southern Altai) Boor was in Tibet, where he studied for 17 years and became the first Altaian to receive a doctorate in theology. Returning to his homeland, Lama Boor settled in the Karakol Valley, where he lived until 108 years. Locals remember and honor the place where Lama Boor liked to meditate - a small grotto in a rock with a hole in the ceiling. And at the site of the cremation of the famous Altai spiritual leader, who brought the teachings of Buddhism to Central Altai, in 1996 a two-meter stupa (*suburgan*) of white granite was installed with the upper metal part symbolizing the Sun and Moon (Fig. 1)



**FIG. 1. AK-KOBA TRACT. SUBURGAN AT THE CREMATION SITE OF LAMA BOOR.
(ARCHIVAL PHOTO 1998)**

The identity of Boor in the Sacred Valley acquired the features of holiness, became legendary: “When the ashes of Boor were taken to the cave in the casket, encased in gold plates, they declared Mount Codegor sacred. From now on, no woman could step on the slopes of this mountain. If the herds of sheep went there, then only the men could return them, and the female shepherds had to wait until the sheep came back down. In

order not to disturb the spirit of the wise Boor in the place of his eternal calm, no one dared to cut firewood here, make a noise or talk loudly after sunset. After the funeral of Boor, people witnessed a miracle: in a small hollow on the top of a steep hill where his body was put on fire, a birch grove rose in the place of the fire, as if the logs that had been laid on the fire gained a new life. Since then, the Kara-Naimans among all the trees especially revere birch. No one can cut it down or break a branch from a tree"⁵. His kin continue to this day. Currently, his descendants of the ninth generation live in the Karakol Valley.

During the Perestroika years, when the turbulent processes of search for the Altai national idea began, the stupa was destroyed and plundered. Now the monument has been restored with funds raised by Buddhists of Altai, Buryatia and Altai representatives of the Mayman clan (to which Boor belonged). Inside the stupa there were sacred texts-sutras and incense which had been given to Altai Buddhists by the Dalai Lama XIV specifically for this monument.

In the 18th century, the first tagil-shrines began to appear, which, on the one hand, are a legacy of the ancient traditions of the Altai people, but during the development of Buddhism in Altai, they experienced its deep influence. So, the famous Bozyr Tash sanctuary in the Elovskaya land of the Ongudai district (located west of the Karakol valley) has a layout corresponding to the Buddhist mandala (Fig. 2).

Probably, the sanctuary was of great importance for the inhabitants of central Altai, because it was here (in the Elovsky lands) that the Zaisans affirmed the most important events in the life of their people: an army was formed here for the battle between the last rulers of the Dzungaria - Tabachi and Amur Sana; here, a decision was made and signed by twelve zaisans on the entry of Altai into the Russian empire in 1756. There is evidence that the Mongol lamas, who signed for some illiterate zaisans, also took part in this fateful event.

Dzungarian Lamaism set onto Altai soil and gradually created the conditions for the emergence of a new faith, called *Burkhanism* or *Ak Jang*. Kan-Karakol land did not become the cradle of the "new faith" out of nothing. It was under the Lamaist influence for at least three centuries.



FIG. 2. BOZYR TASH SANCTUARY

This is easy to follow by the following signs:

- The name Burkhan as a name designating God is known to the Altai people since ancient times and is a universal Central Asian concept. In Lamaism, Burkhan is called both the Buddha and his images.
- The name of the Burkhanist prayers *murgul* (the word of the West Mongolian root) is also known in the Lamaist world.
- The name of the religious constructions of the Burkhanists *kure, sume* (rectangular sanctuary and altars made of wild stone) is nothing more than the use of the names of the Lamaist monasteries

(*huree, sume*).

- Altai people remember ancient legends about Lamaists who burned *kams*, fighting with the religion of the local population.
- The most clear Lamaist influence is manifested in a sharp change in the attitude of the Burkhanists to water. If shamanists tried to avoid contact with it, then representatives of the “white faith” widely used water in ritual (washing, bathing in arzhan springs, accompanied by praises of the “healing”, “purifying” power of water).

In essence, Burkhanism was reformed under the influence of Lamaism by shamanism. Discarding the bloody sacrifices, worship of Erlik, the god of the underworld, it resumed worshiping of Uch-Kurbustan⁶ (revered since the time of the Turkic Khanate), as the highest deity, and retained the worship of fire. Altai people call the new faith “white” or “milk”, as opposed to shamanism, which is considered the “black” faith and is widely practiced in Altai.

If in early stages, Burkhanists did not accept shamanism (up to the beating of *kams*, the destruction of their tambourines and other attributes), which is quite natural in the early stages of the formation of a new faith, in order to dissociate itself from the system that, in fact, gave rise to it; then later the process of returning to the “white faith” of shamanistic ideas began, its pantheon grew, monotheism had been replaced by polytheism. In Burkhanist prayers, *Tengri*, *Jier-Suu*, *Umai-Aene* are mentioned as deities of the upper world - they were not forgotten, although they fought with shamanism. They also revere *Eesi* - the master-spirits of a particular locality, merged into the image of “Altaydyng-Eesi” - the Master of Altai. The tying of ribbons to trees on the passes is again applied, at the springs as an expression of gratitude to their “owners”. And the veneration of *Oth Ene* – (Mother Fire), in Burkhanism even grows; a more stringent system of prohibitions related to the cult of fire is being made, since the idea of “ritual purity” plays a great role in Burkhanism.

The most striking evidence of the continuity of Burkhanism, shamanism and Tengrianism is the institution of *yarlykchi*. From the beginning, possessing the Sacred Knowledge, *darlyk* or *yarlykchi* used it to harmonize the natural forces and the interconnections between Man and

Nature, away from the vain routine, without interfering in people's daily affairs. Their title, descended from the root *dyar* – (message), and related to the word *dyaryk* – (light), speaks for itself - in the Vedic culture such people are called *Arhats*, the Great Initiates.

But there is another feature of Burkhanism. A number of scholars see in it Christian motives. This also has its own reasons: Burkhanism contributed to building a system of religious and mythological beliefs of the Altai people, in fact, making a return to monotheism, lost with the collapse of the Tengri cult.

Researchers⁷ find direct parallels with Christian rites:

1. The Orthodox Church during the baptist rite gave the name to the newly baptized. New *bailu*, names, were given to their followers by the Burkhanists.
2. During services, priests and their flocks kept standing. Ministers of the Burkhanist cult also recited the prayer while standing.
3. Missionaries preached. Burkhanist agitators also traveled around the Altai yurts, explaining the essence of the new religion, teaching the hosts to perform rites, singing, i.e., they worked with shamanists to convert them to Burkhanism.
4. The Altai Spiritual Mission forbade marrying a non-Christian woman and a non-Christian man. Burkhanists also forbade not only marrying Christian and shamanist women, but also demanded refusal to communicate with them.
5. Missionaries during the services and work constantly used holy water. For Burkhanists, water with juniper also had the function of purification.

These coincidences are not accidental, because Orthodox Christianity also set an example of spiritual unity and this made it attractive. Orthodoxy came to Altai much later than Lamaism - with the beginning of the Altai Orthodox mission, founded in 1830 by the Reverend Makari Glukharev, a scholarly archimandrite, one of the most prominent missionaries of the Russian Orthodox Church in its long history. The Reverend Makarii (Glukharev) and St. Macarius (Nevsky), who later became Metropolitan

of Moscow, were glorified by the Russian Orthodox Church for their missionary work and ranked as saints.

The Altai Spiritual Mission was not the first when the Mission of Russian Orthodox Church was established in Siberia, nor was it the largest in flock or the length of the territory on which it operated. But at the Irkutsk Missionary Congress of 1910, it was called the “model and leader” for other Missions, as it came closest to the ideal of Orthodox missionary work. The Altai Spiritual Mission received such high recognition because it brought up a galaxy of ascetic missionaries for Altai and other Spiritual Missions of the Russian Orthodox Church, and also because the Orthodox education of the peoples of Altai was carried out by Altai missionaries in the spirit of gospel meekness and was a truly apostolic ministry. During their lifetime, contemporaries called some Altai missionaries equal-apostles or even apostles of Altai.

The entire first generation of the Altai intelligentsia - teachers, doctors, writers, artists were exclusively pupils of missionary schools, or children of Altai missionaries, or former employees of the Altai Spiritual Mission. The Mission published books in the Altai language, had medical service represented by paramedics and smallpox vaccinators-missionaries. Before the revolution of 1917, the Mission had 30 missionary camps, more than 40 churches, dozens of chapels, 84 schools, each of which had a library.

It is important to remember that the activity of the Altai Spiritual Mission was not aimed at introducing Russian culture, but at conveying to the inhabitants of Altai the idea of One God, manifesting its grace through love for people. It was this love that the first Altai missionaries demonstrated through their ministry, which attracted thousands of newly baptized Altai people to the fold of the Orthodox Church.

Perhaps the most unexpected evidence of the kinship, interaction and mutual influence of the Turkic and Slavic cultures, as well as the common Vedic sources of Tengrianism and Orthodoxy was the publication in the newspaper *Simbirsky Courier* in 2001, where the main character of the article, Old Believer-*dyrnik* Philip Solodkov says: “... And neither I nor my grandfathers ever went to the Orthodox Church. We have not been ordered ... We have our own God! ... Our God is Tengri, and our faith is

called Tengrianism and it goes back through centuries. It appeared at the end of II - the beginning of I millennium BC⁸. *Dyrniks* (hole makers) had these nicknames as a sect of the Old Believers who prayed to the open Heaven, and even in bad weather, without leaving home, they opened a hole in the wall in the red corner where the Orthodox place icons. This is further evidence that Orthodoxy initially had in its basis ancient Vedic roots common with Tengrianism. And Nikon's religious reform was seen as a violent attempt to undermine the ESTABLISHED foundations of faith. Confirmation of the kinship of the Vedic worldview systems of the ancient Slavs and Turks are artifacts found in central Russia and Siberia: Scythian, Slavic pagan and Turkic necklaces, pendants, earrings and other charms with signs of Heaven (Tengrian cross) and the divine triad, which existed almost simultaneously⁹. (Fig. 3 a, b, c).



FIG. 3: HEAVEN SIGNS: (A) APPLICATION ON THE SADDLE FROM THE 5TH PAZYRYK MOUND, IV CENTURY BC; (B) PENDANT FROM VLADIMIR PROVINCE, XII CENTURY, (C) SLAVIC PENDANT LUNAR - V-VIII C. AD

In our opinion, the primordial foundation of Turkic-Slavic cultural unity is the deep respect by both ethnic groups of Nature as the basis of being. "Being one with nature, a person can revive within themselves frozen and, as so to say, dead forces, as if resurrecting nature as well, turning matter into their body, tearing it from the petrified skeleton of natura naturata and warming it with its fire. The world of dead and inert matter turns into the world of energies, behind which living forces are hidden"¹⁰. In the tradition of Altai and Altai old-timers (in particular, Russian Old Believers) for many centuries, the worldview of the unity of man with nature has been preserved, and not even subject-object, but subject-subject, dialogical relations with it continue to operate. Surprisingly, Altai people are aware of the possibility of "resurrection in themselves" of nature. To

this day, while hunting or cutting livestock for food, they perform ceremonies designed to “materialize” the body of a dead animal, asking forgiveness from its spirit and urging it to be embodied in a new body.

An example of an efficient and prudent management based on the delicate integration of a person into a biogeocenosis and the essential role of the spiritual component is the history of the development of Altai lands by the Old Believers. They were also called Old Believers, *raskolniki* - this is a significant part of the Russian population, which rejected the reform of the Russian Orthodox Church undertaken in the 1650-1660s by patriarch Nikon and Tsar Alexei Mikhailovich. The goal of the reform was to proclaim the liturgical practice according to the Greek model set by the Church of Constantinople. In fact, this reform created the conditions for secularization - the seizure of church property in favor of the state, which caused a split in the Russian Church. Adherents of the Old Believers in the Russian empire were officially called *raskolniki* (secessionists, apostates) and persecuted by both church and secular authorities.

Raskolniki, hiding from the persecution, fled to the east of the country, beyond the Urals, right up to Lake Baikal. In Altai, they settled in a foreign environment without prejudice to it, widely practicing the borrowed form of settlements and using the dispersed method of using natural resources. This way allowed the Old Believers to organically integrate into the adjacent world of the nomadic tribes of the region. The uniqueness of the economic and cultural type prevailing in the Old Believer settlements lay in the fact that, having European traditions and ways of life, they managed to get used to the unusual high-mountain taiga landscape in a short time, to learn the experience of local peoples and on this basis to create a highly profitable commodity diversified economy, which included, in addition to agriculture and cattle breeding, such crafts as hunting, collecting pine nuts, mountain beekeeping. *Raskolniki* actively developed maral breeding and horse breeding.

Specific forms of being, as well as a special type of spiritual disposition, the mentality of Old Believers are revealed through such concepts as “family”, “community”, “cult of elders”, “freemen”, which form the behavioral type of this sub-ethnos. In its economic activities, these cultural

meanings were realized in the form of fishing cooperatives and family cooperatives. The social relations of the Old Believers resulted in a new model of local self-government - a peculiar version of peasant democracy, based on a combination of patriarchal foundations with the desire of enterprising individuals for independence, a "freemen". A peculiarity of Old Believer communication is the spiritual and moral incentives for economic entrepreneurial activity. On the one hand, the need to survive in extreme conditions of the mountain taiga, and on the other hand, the perception of life by the Old Believers as permanent labor, formed a special value system for them. In it the dominant role was played by the concept of labor austerity, combined with the values of well-being. All these qualities contributed to the formation of a high level of prosperity: solid houses with large glazed windows, bright silk and cotton clothes, Chinese bathrobes, porcelain dishes and varnished wooden products, and as a result, most of *Raskolniki* were centenarians¹¹.

Such "spiritual-ecological" ways of life of the Old Believers and nature-centric ways of life of the Altai people created the conditions for complementary, mutually beneficial relations between the autochthonous Altai population and the new comer Russians. Altaians adopted farming skills from the Old Believers using horse harness and farming equipment, beekeeping. Especially they liked the arrangement of a peasant chopped five-wall house with a warm stove-bed, which significantly surpassed the traditional Altai dwellings, *ails*, in terms of comfort and heat preservation. Gradually, in the Altai villages, the dwellings of the Altai were replaced by Russian houses, but the *ails* were not forgotten either - they began to play the role of summer dwellings or summer kitchens and were also used to perform traditional rituals and ceremonies.

At the same time, in fairness it should be said that in the spiritual sphere the people of Altai had a closer and more understandable image of the national hero-savior Oirot Khan than the image of Christ. And having forgotten about the suffering and oppression inflicted by the Dzungars to the indigenous people of Altai (the Oyrot tribes were in the Dzungar Khanate), the Altai people endow Oirot Khan with the features of a valiant warrior, a hero, as if transferring the "great", "ideal" past to the image of

the future, when universal prosperity comes.

Thus, considering the current situation of the search for a National Idea, we come to the conclusion that it is necessary to build a productive interfaith dialogue that arises in the “crossroads” of diachronic and synchronous aspects. Tracing the process of successive changes of religious doctrines in Altai, it is necessary to take into account the processes synchronous to them. In all periods of Altai history, no matter what spiritual doctrine dominates, the ancient primordial foundations formed in the era of Tengrianism continued to exist and are invisibly present in everyday life, in worship of sacred places, in taboos and shamanistic rituals.

The key quality of the dialogue is the bi-directional process of interaction. At an ordinary level, dialogue is often perceived as an exchange of two logics. But if these logics do not grow into new meanings, but remain “each with their own opinion”, then, in fact, these are two monologues, each of which considers its duty to express an opinion, but does not “fall” to hear the opponent’s arguments. Today the interfaith situation in Altai actually looks like that.

M.S. Kagan in his works on cultural studies, substantiating the method of system research as the basis for the formation of modern humanities, promotes the concepts of “dialogue” and “communication”. In his opinion, the essential quality of the dialogue is its subject-subjective nature, symmetry, bi-directionality of its process, focus on gaining community. The communication has a uni-directional action from subject to object, where the latter takes a passive, perceiving position. When any of the faiths begins to strengthen its position by imposing its own, as it believes, the only true postulates, such communication leads first to suppression of opponents, and then to inevitable rebellion¹².

Thus, a dialogue can only take place between participants who have already formed the quality of subjectivity. Holistic understanding of one’s own and another’s culture is possible only when the declared logics are capable of generating meaning — understanding and adopting a different logic. An example of dialogical meaning generation is the image of Oirot Khan. His messianic image is not only the legacy of alien religions: Lamaism or Christianity. Altai Oirot Khan is not Maitreya of Buddhists and not

Christian Jesus. This is their own, ancient, national hero, possessing many specifically Altai features. Consequently, Burkhanism is not just a “new phase” of the development of shamanism or the degradation of any of a world religion. This is a completely unique religious system, which is based on the idea of becoming one’s own nationality, one’s own history.

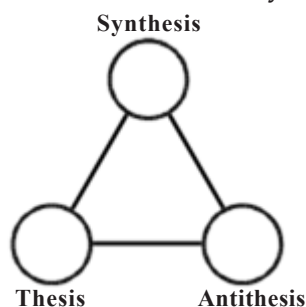


FIG. 4. *THESIS – ANTITHESIS – SYNTHESIS*

The nature of dialogue has a triad basis. It turns out to be held only when, during a dialogue presenting the two logics of “thesis - antithesis”, a third, qualitatively new, synthesis is generated (Fig. 4). The triad contains the archetype of stability, integrity: three points of support are necessary and sufficient to achieve sustainability; transcendental unity - God has a threefold nature.

L. Batkin, M. Bakhtin, Y. Lotman, developing the theory of dialogue, talk about the position of the “third” in the dialogue. But the third is not in the arithmetic, literal sense, but rather in the metaphysical. This third one is an “imaginary”, but nonetheless completely real participant in the dialogue.

It is well known that the dualistic paradigm of classical science, applied to the humanities, eventually led them to a standstill. The fact is that the semantic basis of even numbers represents a passive (Yin) principle, is associated with separation, conflict. While the triad contains the concept of integrity. And today the universally applicable public administration principle “divide and rule” is in the hands of politicians and temporary officials, who manage to take everything that is in their hands while they are the distributor. And a considerable help to them in this process is the dispute of monologues of various faiths represented in Altai. Each of them

calls into their ranks parishioners, praising themselves and discrediting the rest. Today there is another trick in world practice, which supposedly brings all religions together - the creation of a new, synthesis religion, such as Baha'ism in India. And this is not a new idea.

In parallel with the development of the problems of dialogue and dialogical relations in cultural studies, the formation of a theory of synthesis took place. It arose as a natural reaction to the process of fragmentation, decomposition, specialization and concretization of all areas of culture, which led by early twentieth century to the extreme fragmentation of the picture of the world in human consciousness, and, as a result, to a mosaic worldview. The synthetic paradigm was designed to restore the lost integrity, which was manifested in the turbulent process of remythologization - the revival of ancient mythologies and the formation of new myths. Actually, the Burkhanists in Altai went along this path. However, having solved some particular problems in the development of art and some cultural phenomena, the synthesis paradigm did not bring the expected results at the level of the entire system. The synthetic integrity of the system turned out to be achievable, but at a high price: the loss of the individuality of its constituent subsystems — the destruction of their subjectivity. Therefore, Burkhanism began its history with repressions over the *kams*, for which the shamanists still have not forgiven him.

The only way to overcome the spiritual crisis at the turn of the millennium can be a genuine interfaith dialogue as an effective means of gaining lost integrity. And if the doctrine of Tengrianism possessed genuine original spiritual integrity in Altai, it could have become the basis of modern inter-confessional dialogue, which would be based on the search for a community that was originally and imminently inherent in all Vedic doctrines? The anti-entropic orientation of the dialogue is able to bring the system out of the state of crisis. And the highest form of dialogue is heuristic dialogue - productive, giving rise to a qualitatively new, previously absent reality. This reality may become the creation of modern meanings of the original integrity of Tengrianism.

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SACRAL ECOSYSTEM OF SACRED TERRITORIES *Caste Study of Karakol Valley, Altai Republic*

D.I. MAMYEV

ABSTRACT

The article examines the relationship in the modern world of the categories "ecosystem" and "ethnoecology" taking the case study of a specific local area - the Karakol Valley, which has the status of "sacred" for the Altai people. On the basis of geomorphological analysis, the author comes to the conclusion that it is necessary to preserve the phenomenon of the sacred places, where the markers of the crystalline structure of Earth are concentrated. From the point of view of traditional culture, deposits formed at such nodal points have planetary significance, creating the necessary energy flows to maintain the planet's noosphere. The sacred lands are the acupuncture points of the planet Earth, the junction of the nerve endings of a single cosmoplanetary organism.

Keywords: ethnoecology, ecosystem, cultural landscape, crystal lattice of the earth, Sacred lands, cosmoplanetary organism.

Paradoxical as it is, but just with the development of contemporary fundamental science, it becomes more clear and, in the main, more logical, that the deep sense of folklore and traditions have been maintained today in the native cultures since ancient times. This phenomenon is considered by ethno-ecology – the science which explores human's mutual relations with the world around, from the point of view of traditional culture's representations. In the centre of attention of ethno-ecology there is also a question about the influence of ethno-cultural traditions on mutual relations of man with nature and environment. Due to the return of this aspect of the traditional perception of the world into the contemporary picture of the world, the propaganda of nature protection activity which

leads to the formation of new principles of “unbreakable use of nature” in the economy of developed countries, has been greatly reinforced. In its turn, the new economic model puts forth the demand for the education of eco-oriented type of personality, which from old times has been forming in the lap of ethno-pedagogics¹.

Development of the above-mentioned processes confirms the statement of L.N. Gumilyov about the landscape, which forms culture. The cultural systems, like the natural ones, are more stable, having maximum variety of their structural elements. The culture of Russia (as well as of many other countries) is a complicated mosaic system, consisting of multiple local ethno-geographical cultures. The territory of contemporary Russia and the former Soviet Union, is pure and simply the confederation of native cultures, including also the Russians themselves, united by eco-systematic community and ethno-ecological unity. However, today this variety is suppressed and overcome by aggressive urban monocultures, i.e., by a modern cosmopolitan technogeneous culture and massive pop-culture, which were formed in other landscape-cultural realities. These monocultures don't take into consideration economic peculiarities of the traditional usage of nature and nuances of spiritual perception of nature, which was formed by the peoples of Russia during many centuries. They set progressive tempo of assimilation of small cultures, which present smaller landscape zones of the Eurasia continent, generating favourable conditions for the notion of hidden xenophobia, when a person unconsciously or consciously avoids or is ashamed of his ethno-cultural identity. As a result, aboriginal cultures are artificial forms, which are far from a living landscape. It brings up the crisis phenomena and destruction of both the culture itself and natural surroundings, where this or that culture was formed. Thus, there is a threat to stable development of the whole natural-state ecosystem. That's why, the necessity of competent study and pedagogical popularization of local traditional cultures and the complex of their traditional ecological knowledge has arisen in opposition to the urban monoculture.

Ecosystem is a biological system (biogeocenose), consisting of association of living organisms (biocenose), surroundings of their

inhabitation (biotope), the system of ties, which realize the exchange of substance and energy between them. It presents one of the main notions in ecology. In the context of above-mentioned ethno-ecological conception, one of the new notions of such system, based on the results of modern ethno-ecological researches, may become the notion "Sacral Ecosystem" (or ecosystem of sacred territories). It is a complicated self-organizing, self-regulating and self-developing system, based on energy information exchange between human and planetary organism. This exchange is carried out by means of special plots of land, possessing unique combination of geological- geographical anomalies. One of the strongly expressed example of such ecosystem is the Karakol Valley, revered by the local people as Sacred. The Valley is situated in the centre of the Republic of Altai and its total area is more than 60,000 hectares, with clearly expressed altitudinal zonal and landscape diversity.

In order to preserve one of the sacred places of Altai – the Karakol Valley and to protect the traditional culture of native Altaians, the social organization "School of Soul Ecology" (Tengri) was set up in 1995. By the initiative of this organization Specially Protected Natural Area (SPNA) was founded in 2001. It was the first experiment to protect especially important native territories by means of SPNA in Russia. The conception of SPNA-The Karakol (ethnic) natural park *Uch Enmek*, is based on the principles of the doctrine "sacred ecosystem", which presents a native human as an important component in the stable development of the natural landscape of "sacred ecosystems" and a planetary organism as a whole. Long term aim of SPNA is to work-out the normative-legislative methodology and practical modeling of the stable development of sacred territories in contemporary conditions on the principles of international declaration of United Nations about the rights of the native peoples, Russian laws on safeguarding the monuments of historical-cultural heritage and so on. At the final stage, this territory had to become the first Russian reserve of the traditional culture of the native people of Altai, based on indissoluble connection of traditional knowledge and "sacred ecosystems" in which the principles of the above-mentioned declaration act. Natural resources of the territory must become the collective property

of the whole native community.

In the process of carrying out complex researches in the Sacred Valley Karakol, which have been taking place since 2006, we came to the conclusion that the ecosystem of the Karakol Valley presents a classical example of integration of natural and cultural landscape, which began to form since ancient times – from 4,000 – 3,000 B.C. And taking into consideration, that there are fragments of human sites of late Paleolithic, it is possible that the age of this symbiosis goes back for 30-40,000 years into the depth of times.

Geological history of Altai is almost 2 billion years. In the distant past, the territory of this mountain region was occupied by a vast ocean water area, island chains, near which sandy, clay and lime deposits were formed. Today these are presented as crystalline schists. The following motions and lifting of the earth's crust were accompanied by volcanic activity, the traces of which are preserved in the form of volcanogenic-sedimentary masses. About 1.5 billion years ago, the lifting plots of earth's crust merged into vast underwater swelling, at the edges of which gathered the masses of lime and lime-siliceous sediments, which now go out to the surface as rocky ledges from limestone and quartzite. About 300-350 million years ago, the territory of the southern part of the region was subjected to mighty naval intrusions, which were replaced by the new mountain-building processes, which slowly turned it to land, which reached considerable heights. Series of folded-block tectonic shifts formed the main features of mountain country, at the northern side of which sedimentary masses continued to accumulate. This newest stage refers to the border of Paleogene-Neogene period, when the main elements of the relief were formed.

Natural peculiarity of the Karakol Valley in its geological structure can be seen in the map (Fig.1). If one sees the geological map of the territory, one will at once pay attention to the fact, that among sedimentary-metamorphic rocks there appear dikes from volcanogenic rocks (gabbro-dolerites), of the Upper Devonian (D³), which are concentrated just in the valleys of the rivers Karakol and Ursul. According to the geologists, these gabbro-dolerites contain a rather high concentration of the magnetic

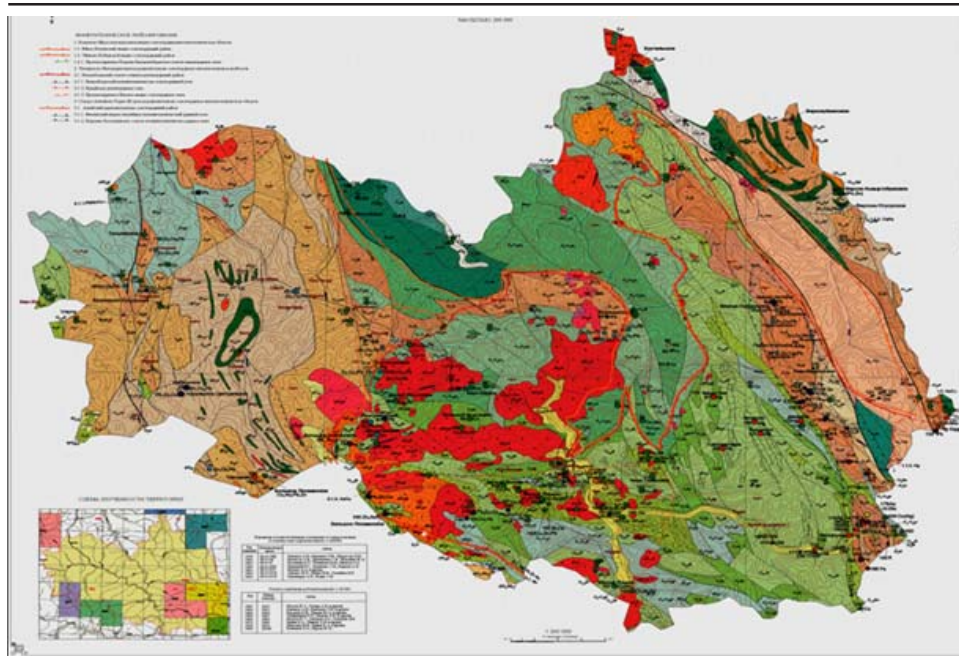


FIG. 1. MINERAGENIC ZONING MAP OF THE ALTAI REPUBLIC. DARK GREEN “RING” - A DIKE IN THE KARAKOL VALLEY

mineral. And the main peculiarity in geological structure of this Valley is that only in the Karakol Valley these rocks fill ring dike. As a matter of fact, in the centre of the Karakol Valley there is natural, solar-active annular magnet, the exchange of cosmic and planetary energies takes place through it. A famous Altain philosopher M. Yu. Shishin calls them “astral-mental lenses of the planet”². In his opinion, such lenses are the points of active planetary genesis, “the cleanest points of geo-cosmic energy exchange are mountain regions where a great number of cosmic particles and dust are accumulated, where the unique combinations of minerals, rare earth elements are concentrated...”. All this creates the greatest quantity of geomagnetic anomalies and radiations.

One more confirmation of the necessity of preservation of the phenomenon of Sacred places is the conception of crystal structure of the Earth. During their research of the natural crystals’ forms, scientists found out that with the increase in planet age, loss of the elements of natural crystal symmetry took place. This tendency was scientifically settled while studying the process of minerals’ formation: together with the run of

geological clock the minerals which have a complicated chemical structure, but correspondingly lower systems are being born in more and more increasing quantity. So, at the beginning of the planet formation there appeared minerals having a simple chemical structure, but they presented the supreme systems of symmetry. But in the latest era (Cenozoic), mainly the minerals of lower symmetry appeared. Crystallographer E.S. Fedorov in 1890 theoretically proved that in nature there may exist 230 spatial groups of crystal symmetry in total, and by present geological time all theoretically possible forms of crystals are chosen by nature: it's nowhere to continue their row, according to this theory³.

There is an impression, that nature led the earth substance through all known (at least to the humanity) combinations and at the present geological time exhausted them. Contemporary geological epoch is exclusive in the history of Earth, its turning moment. (Emphasis mine), Exclusiveness of the contemporary geological period also is confirmed by the analysis of most important geological stages in the life of Earth. According to the data of the geologist A.L. Grozdilov, the following borders of the stages of deposition are known: 3,600, 3,025, 2,500, 2,025, 1,600, 1,225, 900, 625, 400, 225, 100, 25 million years (correspondingly, the duration of the deposition's stages themselves: 575, 525, 475, 425, 375, 325, 275, 225, 175, 125, 75 million years). From this it is seen that the duration of each stage is shorter than the previous one by 50 million years. And the last stage – its time spread is 25 million years, is not shortened by this quantity⁴. We can also see the loss of the symmetry elements in the living nature: development of spherical symmetry to the radial-beam symmetry takes place. From another side, the level of the organization of the living substance is becoming more complicated. Regularity, noticed for the inert nature is also displayed in the living one. It may be noted that both organic and inorganic life reached some important border simultaneously. It may also be noted that both living and "inanimate" matter reached this border on principle by the same way of development.

The hypothesis about the crystal structure of the Earth isn't new. Pythagoras and Plato identified the Earth with dodecahedron (12-agon) long ago. The last one spoke about it: "The Earth, if to look at it from

above, looks like a ball, sewn out of twelve patches of leather". In the 19th century, this theme was raised by a number of English and French scientists (L. Green, R. Owen, Sh. Lallemand, A. Lapparen, M. Levi), who noticed that the Earth had the elements of symmetry, which are peculiar to the tetrahedron⁵.

And rather important is the hypothesis of N. Goncharov, V. Makarov and V. Moroz about the earth's nucleus as a growing crystal, which was put forward at the end 1960s⁶. This crystal by way of its force field, as it is supposed, influences the development of various natural processes, which take place both in the internal parts and on the surface of our planet. And just very recently Professor Borje Johansson and his colleagues from Uppsala University and Swedish Royal Institute of Technology got indirect confirmation of this original theory of the structure of the Earth's nucleus. As a result of geophysical explorations, they came to the conclusion, that a firm iron Earth's nucleus has a crystalline structure with space-centered cubic lattice (in one cell of such lattice the atoms are situated in the corners of the cube and one more atom is in the centre of the cube)⁷.

And at the end of the 1920s, a geologist S. Kislitsin pointed out that the perfect form of Earth combines in itself the features from the most complicated Platon bodies – dodecahedron and icosahedron⁸. In his opinion, in their edges and vertexes flows of energy of the internal parts of the Earth are concentrated, which leads to the formation of natural resources here.

From the point of view of traditional culture, deposits formed in such node points have planetary significance, creating necessary flows of energy for supporting noosphere of the planet. Such places from ancient times were reverred as Sacred. Thus, we may define that Sacred lands are acupuncture points of the planet Earth, the places of joint nervous ends of the common cosmic-planetary organism. What will happen if one cuts all the glands out of the human organism? The output of minerals from these deposits is removal out of the planetary organism "the secretion of its glands", part of which plays an important functional role in the planetary organism. As the biologists consider, the form reflects the function. That's why G.S. Frantov, studying systematicity of our

surrounding world, came to the conclusion that in nature everything is advisable: the deposits of natural resources must “carry in the inanimate nature their functional loads”⁹.

All above statements confirm the basic foundations of the traditional philosophic knowledge of native peoples, which was born long before science appeared and was formed as intuitive (inner) knowledge at the level of noosphere, passing (or reading) by means of interaction of a human with sacred spaces from generation to generation.

Contemporary discoveries, carried out by science, just confirm the significance of traditional knowledge which during many centuries wasn't claimed by contemporaries. And today's discoveries in various spheres of science demand still more detailed and serious study of the traditional knowledge and integration with it, as to get to know cosmic-planetary state of the environment and its way of development in future is possible only using “dialectical synthesis” of knowledge. Otherwise inadequate actions of a human may bring the irreparable social and ecological consequences, as the principle of systematic interaction says.

One may see the seriousness of such supposition in the Karakol Valley, on the territory of which all archeological history of the mountain Altai is presented: traces of ancient sites of a human, burial mounds, drawings on rocks, megalithic objects and so on – from the Stone Age till ethnographic time. To a wide list of types of material cultural heritage may be added the complex of intangible heritage (rituals, ceremonies, myths, epics and so forth), forming in such a way metaphysical unity of the Sacred space.

In my childhood I heard from my mother's brother (*Taai*, Uncle) that in the upper reaches of the Karakol Valley, at the foot of the mountain *Uch Enmek* (the highest point of the valley is 2,980 metres above sea level)) there is a unique Tree: either stony or iron, or just the Tree of the huge sizes – *Bai Terek* (Sacred Poplar). And many people of elder generation went there in search of this mythical Tree. The name *Uch Enmek* reflects many layers of mythology and is translated both as “Three Parietal Fontanel” and as “Three Edges” (in the geometrical sense). The first variant reflects the world presentation of the Altaians, who regard

everything as living, like themselves, subject. From this point of view, the planet Earth is a living organism and according to the law of likeness and figurativeness, has the same functional organs and nodal points of nervous system, as any human or animal. And in this presentation the mountain *Uch Enmek* fulfills the function of energy exchange of the planet with the cosmos. That's why, figuratively, designating the functional significance of this mountain, it is also called "umbilical cord of the Earth". Such multilayer structure shows multi-functionality of one and the same territory (Parietal Fontanel or Umbilical Cord) depending on the level of energy information like the *chakras* of the human organism. Another notion of "edge" personifies trihedral structure of its crystal or more correctly its another functional-qualitative component – crystallinity. Such three-edged lattice has the crystal of diamond – tetrahedron – the pyramid, consisting of four triangles. The expression "diamond edge of Altai" has really metaphysical meaning, which was formed not by one generation of people.

In search of the named mythical tree, many routes around the mountain *Uch Enmek* were organized but it was found in the form of the mountain itself – it consists of three tops situated in a row and having from above the look of three-high branchy Tree, lying on the Terektinskiy range. Then it became clear the toponymical meaning of the name of the mountain range (*Terek* Altaian – Poplar) on which the tops of the mountain *Uch Enmek* are located and its functional meaning as "umbilical cord": The World Axis – The Tree of Life, The Tree of Ancestors, which for many cultures is connected with continuity between generations.

As mentioned above, in the monuments of historical-cultural heritage of the Karakol Valley all archeological history of mountain and piedmont Altai is presented. It is "the palimpsest – multilayer cultural text"¹⁰, which is organically interlaced in geological – geophysical matrix of the Valley. With the complex natural-science and cultural research of these monuments, and interpretation of their results through the prism of epic heritage of Altaians, well-knit and "scientifically proved" system of thin field informational "accumulator" was opened, using rotation of the Earth planet and synchronized with the global processes, which are caused by precession movement of Earth Axis.

For creation of this system, accumulating energy information data and generating them to higher levels of cosmic-planetary space, our ancestors in days gone by, used both geological-geophysical peculiarities of planetary system and human body, taking into consideration all its psycho-energetic qualities. In fact, sacred ecosystems are “bionic” (see “bionics”, “biomimetics”) platforms, which harmonize human vibration with Universal, creating united interaction and mutually regulated space. It is proved by new researches, which was done by us in the Karakol Valley. Contemporary archeological science, which destroyed tens of burial mounds in Altai, was unfortunately due to Eurocentric ideology based on theory about illiteracy and under-development of all ancient cultures. That’s why the researches of monuments of ancient Altai cultural heritage initially were directed to the absence of any fundamental knowledge in this field of science. Only due to this reason, archeologists didn’t try to do an external exploration before starting the excavations: nobody did geomagnetic, radiometric and other surveys; there weren’t the detailed instrumental grid sheet surveys. After the excavations, there was no attempt to analyse and form hypotheses of the researches’ results with reference to the local traditional culture, which inherited and saved the ancient knowledge.

While carrying out modern researches after these excavations, initial message there was accepted an axiom, that tradition and interaction of native inhabitants of Altai with the Sacred Valley is based on its perception as a live organism. After that we could “see” the above-mentioned Tree, and also notice the form of stones, lying on burial mounds, saw that the majority of stones (more than 85 %) were of the same petrographic composition and were taken intentionally from weakly spread dykes of magnetite-containing dolerites of Upper Devonian period (D³).

During the carrying out of geomagnetic survey of these mounds, one could easily see magnetic anomalies, distributed in mound’s space, created with the help of magnetic properties of stones, which contain minerals of magnetite. After that we have no difficulties to notice the regularity in angle of slope from the vertical of stony steles, which are situated near the mounds: 23.5° – 24°, that almost coincides with the angle of slope of the

Earth Axis in regard to orbital plane of rotation around the Sun. All that points to the fact that the builders of these complexes weren't illiterate, as we suppose about them today. Visualizing all this complex of monuments, which are carefully built into natural habitat of the Valley together with noospheric model of cosmic-planetary space's structure and epic heritage of Altaians, we reconstruct metaphysical sense of these objects.

According to the latest scientific data, the main changes in biosphere of the Earth take place due to accumulation of bioenergy and it's the most active part – psycho-energy. Psychic energy is the main type of energy, influencing all cosmic and earth processes. The main conclusion from all the newest discoveries is that human consciousness is the most powerful factor, which forms many of the earth processes. It's evident that this energy doesn't disappear but concentrates in magnetic sphere, consisting of uncountable quantity of thin separate layers, which cover all planet and form its frequency-resonance characteristics. In traditional cultures of native peoples, the interrelation of actions and thoughts of a human with condition of the environment, its sensitive reaction on human actions, was realized from ancient times.

From this point of view, the Karakol Valley in its combination of natural and cultural landscape is the acupuncture point of planetary organism. With that, the burials of human bodies, which were obligatory mummified or frozen in specially created frost lenses under the mounds, apparently take on the role of frequency transformer (converter) of the energy-information flow. Also, according to geologists' data, more than half of the excavated mounds appeared to be without human remains, although there weren't any differences in the external view of mounds. These mounds are called "cenotaphs" and there were apparently buried other types of converters – rocks with special combination of the minerals, in particular big (70-10 cm. in diameter) boulders of quartzite and so on. But archeologists who are "directed" only to typical presentation about mounds as graves, didn't manage to pay attention to it and note their time.

The role of sacred ecosystem as acupuncture point in planetary organism is not simply in transformation of energy information flow, but aimed at the

fulfillment of corrective influence on disorders in human organism by the way of providing to this organism informational resources for reaching the conditions of self-regulation and self-recovery. It has been observed during the series of researches on Bashadarskiy mounds by means of equipment for segmental diagnostics of the "Imedis" centre. Segmental bio-electronic functional diagnostics (SDG) – one of the methods of electropuncture diagnostics, is based on measuring electrical characteristics of biologically active zones (BAZ) of human skin. SDG allow to carry out the integral express-estimation of the human health condition: functional condition of homeostasis, condition of the vegetative nervous system (VNS), stress reaction and ability to self-direction. The method allows to estimate the influence of any object "carrying the information" on human, in this case – the range of sacral objects of natural and historical-cultural character, which are situated on the territory of the Karakol ecosystem.

The second part of researches was carried out by using the equipment of K. Korotkov, by the method of gas discharge visualization, based on the effect of Kirlian, it is called in science by the term "bioelectrography" based on glow of live objects in the magnetic field. According to the data of K. Korotkov, the equipment allows to get good information about the presence of structural and functional changes and disorders in organs and systems, estimates the condition of the whole organism and influence of different effects on it. In the process of analysis of measuring by GDV method on the above mentioned objects, convincing data was collected. They demonstrated the tendencies of the activating influence of the emission of the heritage objects of the ecosystem of Karakol Valley on the organism of tested people¹¹.

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PILGRIMAGE TO SUMERU, GORNYI ALTAI*

K. WARIKOO

Altai has been variously described as ‘Gate to Shambhala’, ‘Pearl of Asia’, ‘Siberia’s Switzerland’, ‘The Golden Mountains’ and so on. The ‘Golden Mountains’ are revered by the Altaians, Buddhists and Burkhanists. The Altai region spans over vast area at the junction of Russia, Kazakhstan, Mongolia and China. Altai is full of natural bounties – rivers and lakes, splendor of snowy peaks, luxuriant taiga, steppes, rich flora and fauna. Amazing natural landscapes, historical antiquity, rich mineral resources, agriculture and tourist attraction lend Altai a unique character.

Altai Republic also known as Gornyi Altai is mainly constituted of mountains and forests and covers an area of 92,600 sq. kms. Gornyi Altaisk is the administrative centre of Altai Republic, which is part of Siberian Federal District. The Republic does not have rail access, but is connected by a very good road – the Chuisky Tract, upto the Mongolian border. Nicholas Roerich described Altai as the centre of Eurasia being situated at “an equal distance from the four oceans”.

I availed of the opportunity to visit Altai in June 2014. On 28th June 2014, I along with Dr. Irina Zherinosenko - the culturologist and Associate Professor at Altai State Technical University, Barnaul, Danil Mamyev - Director of the Karakol National Park, Alfred - the ace videographer and Vitaly - the legal consultant and culturologist left Barnaul in Lexus SUV

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See <https://www.vifindia.org/paper/2020/august/06/Siberia-and-India-Historical-Cultural-Affinities>

for Gornyi Altai. The journey took about 12 hours and after crossing the Ob river we passed through lush green grass fields, pine and birch trees lining the road and wheat, mustard fields on the way. The area is sparsely populated and the highway is well maintained. We stopped over at Biysk town, which is about 200 kms from Barnaul. It is here that the rivers Katun and Biya join to form the Ob river. Later on we stopped in Strostki village and saw the museum and memorial of a local Russian poet and actor Vassily Shukskin. There is a beautiful church in Strostki village. Moving on, we stopped and saw the National Museum of Altai Republic which was opened in 2013 in a newly built modernised building. The museum houses the Altai artefacts, *Ail*, stone *balbals* (figures), *Kezir Tash* (ancient stones), Scythian Ice princess, mummy, burial place etc. There are two separate halls devoted to Roerich and his works. Roerich Pact was being commemorated by the museum in a series of events being organized from 20 June to 20 July 2014.

The Karakol Valley is home to several villages, many ancient burials and the sacred mountain of Uch Enmek (Sumeru). The Valley is the heart of the Uch Enmek Nature Park, being managed by Danil Mamyev. A geologist by training and having over 30 years experience in environmental field and indigenous issues, Danil Mamyev is the initiator and moving spirit behind the development and functioning of the Karakol Ethno-National Park. He has been an ardent promoter of traditional culture, customs and beliefs of the indigenous Altai people, at the same time being very committed to preservation of the local environment.

In the evening we reached Uch Emmek – the Karakol National Park, spanned over a big area. Several yurts have been erected here for the tourists. We stayed in the yurts for the night. However, new modern building of guest house with all facilities started operating soon after our arrival. Danil, the founder Director of the Karakol Park, explained the sanctity of this place and its surroundings. The aura of sacredness prevails here. No trace of garbage is found inside the Park or its surroundings, everything being put in the designated bins. There is a separate kitchen in the park, where we and other guests had dinner. A fire place is marked by a tripod in the kitchen dining hall and is considered to be the sacred

space. Hot bath and steam sauna in the *bania* provided in the Park, enable the guests to relax after tiresome journey and treks.

PILGRIMAGE TO MOUNT SUMERU

Mount Meru is a sacred mountain in Hindu, Jain as well as Buddhist cosmology and is considered to be the center of all the physical, metaphysical and spiritual universes. Meru is also called Sumeru in Sanskrit. Roerich believed “Belukha and Kailash to be earthly manifestations of Mount Meru (Sumeru), the sacred mountain, which through a process of syncretism, can be found in a number of Siberian and Central Asian shamanic traditions. Roerich saw Belukha-Kailas-Meru as a reflection of what he felt was a universal tendency of all faiths to create central cosmological structures that were vertical in nature – be they mountains, trees or built structures. Whatever its physical form, any such *axis mundi* around which the universe revolved, linked the earthly world with heaven above, and also with whatever underground realm existed below.”¹Whereas Altaians openly talk of the sacral Mount Belukha-Altai’s highest peak, it being the abode of *Altai-eezi* (custodian spirit of Altai), they would not disclose the location of Sumeru Parvat (Uch Sumeru-three peaked Sumeru), it being mystic and Sacred mount performing the function of Earth’s umbilical cord connecting it to Cosmos.²

According to Puranas, Meru is the home or seat of the gods. A 4th century Sanskrit dictionary *Amarkosha* (1.49), describes Meru/Sumeru as ‘Golden Mountains’, the mountain of jewels and the abode of gods (*Meru: Sumeru hemadri-Ratansanuh Suralayah*).³ According to *Itihasik Sthanwali* (a historical dictionary of place names) north Meru is situated near Siberia.⁴ In his book *The Arctic Home in the Vedas*, Bal Gangadhar Tilak concludes that “the ancestors of the Vedic Rishis lived in an Arctic home in inter-Glacial times.”⁵ According to Tilak, “Mount Meru is the terrestrial North Pole of our astronomers”.⁶ The *Surya-Siddhanta* states that Mount Meru lies in ‘the middle of the Earth’. *Narpatijayacharya*, a 9th century text, mentions Sumeru to be in the middle of the Earth. Varahmihira in his *Panch-siddhantika* states Mount Meru to be at the North Pole. This

description in the ancient Indian text tallies with the belief firmly held by the indigenous Altaians even today. The Puranas and Hindu epics, often state that Surya, i.e. the sun-god, alongwith its planets and stars together as one unit, circumambulate Mount Meru every day. According to Tilak, Mount Meru is described in the Vedic literature, as the seat of seven *Adityas* in the *Taittiriya Aranyaka*, while the eighth *Aditya* namely Kashyapa is said never to leave the great Meru or Mahameru.⁷ Kashyapa is further described as communicating light to the seven *Adityas*, and himself perpetually illumining the great mountain.⁸

Bal Gangadhar Tilak , popularly known as Lok Manya Tilak, published his book *The Arctic Home in the Vedas* from Pune in 1903. It was a sequel to his *Orion or Researches into the Antiquity of the Vedas*, which was published earlier in 1894. Tilak was a mathematician turned astronomer, historian, journalist, philosopher and an enlightened leader and fighter for India's independence from the British colonial rule. In this book Tilak propounded the idea that the North Pole was the original home of the Aryans during the pre-glacial period, which they had to leave due to the ice deluge and had to migrate to the northern parts of Europe and Asia in search of lands for new settlements. Tilak who studied and interpreted certain Vedic hymns, Vedic chronology and Vedic calendars, discusses the antiquity of the Vedas, of the Aryans and their possible original home as being somewhere near the Arctic (North Pole). My personal experiences at Sumeru Parvat testify to the veracity of the few statements made by Bal Bangadhar Tilak about Sumeru in his book *The Arctic Home of the Vedas*. Having never travelled as far as Sumeru, Tailak's imagination, vision and knowledge was extraordinary. His works and contribution need to be studied by the professional historians, astronomers and philosophers in depth and disseminated widely.

Prof. K.S. Valdiya, Professor of Geodynamics at Jawaharlal Nehru Centre for Advanced Scientific Research, Bangalore, has interpreted the historical data provided by ancient Indian *Puranas* and epics to identify and pinpoint the ancient geography of India. While pointing to the position of *Bharatvarsh* (India), Valdiya cites *Kurma Puran* (43) and *Vishnu Puran* (Part 2,2) as stating that "in the middle of *Jambudweep* is situated the many-

splendoured Meru, the focal point of the world of the Puran people".⁹ And "*Bharatvarsh* lay south of the Meru masiff, across the arch-shaped Himalaya mountain belt".¹⁰ Valdiya also cites *Markandeya Puran*, *Varah Puran*, *Matsya Puran*, *Devi Puran*, *Kurma Puran* and *Mahabharat* to pinpoint the northern neighbours of *Bharatvarsh*. He writes, "Northwest of *Bharatvarsh*, across the Himalaya, was a country known a *Ilavritvarsha* following a bow-shaped terrain around the Meru massif of great height and tremendous splendor."¹¹ And the "countries neighbouring *Ilavritvarsh* are *Bhadrashwavarsh* in the east, *Hiranyavarsh* in the northeast, *Kimpurushvarsh* in the southeast, *Bharatvarsh* in the south, *Harivarsh* in the southwest, *Ketumalavarsh* in the west, *Ramyakvarsh* in the northwest and *Kuruvarsh* in the north".¹² According to Valdiya this configuration places "Meru at the centre of *Jambudweep* in the Pamir massif in Central Asia".¹³ He identifies the countries described as *Ilavritvarsh*, *Ketumalavarsh*, *Harivarsh*, *Bhadrashwavarsh*, *Hiranyavarsh*, *Ramyakvarsh* and *Kuruvarsh* as the Central Asian countries of Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Xinjiang, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan.¹⁴

On the basis of the Puranic description of the northern neighbouring territories of India, Professor Valdiya's interpretation and my extensive field visits in Central Asia, Siberia and the Altai- the Sumeru Parvat can easily be identified to be in *Hiranyavarsh* of the Puranas and not near the Pamir massif (*Ilavritvarsh*). Quite interestingly a publication of Dandi Swami Shri Jaybodh Ashram titled *Avichal Prabhat Granth* (published in Delhi, India) describes the approximate geographical situation of Kalap Gram, which is stated to be bounded by mountains of which Sumeru is one gate. It further states that Kalap Gram is full of small and big trees, flowers, pure cold water and natural beauty.¹⁵ This publication describes this place as a divine abode of gods, where great sages including Narayan Markanday, Ved Vyas, Diptiman, Ashwathama, Kripacharya, Parshuram etc. come from the sky to meet and meditate.¹⁶ This only testifies to the general belief among the Hindus of India about the sacredness of Sumeru and it being the abode of gods. That this belief is also prevalent even today among the Altaians in Altai territory – the actual place of Sumeru, bears ample testimony to the existence of the sacred space of Sumeru in Altai

and its spiritual importance for Hindus, Buddhists and the indigenous people of Altai.

We left the Karakol Park guest house for the Sumeru mountain in the morning of 29 June 2014, in the Lexus jeep driven by Vitaly who is a legal consultant and is also pursuing his doctorate. I found all the five of us (myself, Dr. Irina, Danil, Alfred and Vitaly) having similar thoughts and actions on spirituality, sanctity of Sumeru Parvat, lakes and natural bounties, need to preserve the environment of these spaces, and to promote indigenous cultural heritage. On the way we saw the remains of Scythian Kurgan burial complexes, which were earlier excavated by the Soviet archeologists. Their finds are preserved in the Hermitage Museum at St. Petersburg. On reaching the base camp, we parked the jeep here and packed our food stuff and accessories and loaded on six horses. The horseman Churla and Danil led our way on horses towards Sumeru Parvat. Though this was my first horse ride in life, I found the horse very friendly and intelligent enough to walk on the right path astride dense forests, streams and wet land. On reaching the forest, we dismantled and performed a ritual by tying white bands to the pine trees seeking nature's blessings for our onward strenuous trek to Sumeru Parvat. After about three hours ride, we stopped due to sudden and heavy rains. We pitched the tents in the forest, lit fire, cooked our night meals and went to sleep. A small stream flowed aside at the hill, top of which was laden with snow. Strong winds and heavy rains accompanied by lightning continued through the night, reminding of the difficulty of reaching the destination.

Next day (30 June 2014) too was cloudy. Yet we packed up and moved towards the mountains in a zigzag fashion, as several mounts have to be covered one after another. The horse was very intelligent choosing the right path amidst the sharp edged stones and wet lands. Wearing our raincoats, we moved on in spite of heavy rains. After a ride of five hours, we camped at the point, from where Sumeru Parvat is visible. We pitched our tents and lit fire. After having tea and simple dinner (*grechka, kasha* etc), we retired for the night sleep, which was disturbed by strong winds almost sweeping our tents. Sunny weather greeted us on the Tuesday morning of 1st July 2014, which allowed a clear view of Sumeru. After our

breakfast, I again rode the horse for our next stop – the Altar place. We did not pack our tents and left our stuff at the camp. Dr. Irina, Danil, Vitaly and Alfred did not ride their horses, as it is the tradition to go to Sumeru from this point on foot as a mark of reverence to the holy place. As an exception, I was allowed to ride the horse, due to my age and health situation. The path was laden with sharp edged stones and difficult mountain terrain, too difficult for the horses. My horse was cooperative and understanding, as if he knew that it was my first horse ride. He would navigate the sharp edged stony path carefully, slowly and steadily, giving me no trouble whatsoever.

We stopped at the Altar place before moving towards Sumeru. Danil (the leader and master of ritual ceremonies) performed the traditional rituals, tying white bands to the Altar, makes a fire to which *sampa* (barley flour), ghee, herbs etc. was offered. Milk was also fed to the fire, by each one of us. The flame of the fire was good, indicating the approval of the spirits for our pilgrimage to Sumeru. We also did *parikrama* (circumambulation) making rounds of the Altar and fire. This tradition closely resembles to that of a *yagna* by Hindus in India. Danil offered milk to sky, earth and around to the spirits. He stated that good wind blew after his ritual, which was a positive signal of the acceptance of our offerings by the spirits.

Sumeru and its surrounding territory have been considered sacred by the Altaian people since ancient times. Altai people have powerful emotional connection with this sacred territory and have kept this place secluded from public exposure. Even the photograph of Sumeru has not been popularized, which is not the case with Belukha. When Nicholas Roerich climbed Balukha mountains, he mistook it as Sumeru. Later on he wished to get to Sumeru, but he did not receive the Soviet visa in time. And when his visa reportedly arrived, Roerich had passed away in Kulu (India) two weeks earlier. Altai people believe that Sumeru, locally called Uch Enmek, is the abode of holy *chakras*, which regulate this earth. And my experience at Sumeru testifies to this belief.

We reached Sumeru (about 2,600 metres high) in the afternoon of 1st July 2014. It is barren devoid of any trees etc. On the top, there are three

peaks connected with each other. Altaians call these peaks as the three antennae connecting the earth with the cosmos, and imparting energy to this world. There are several lakes around Sumeru and several fresh water streams originating from the mountains. At the foothill of Sumeru, there is a beautiful lake covered with ice and clean water. I requested Danil to let me have a bottle of water from this lake for taking back home. Danil meditated for a while and later answered in the affirmative. He went near the lake and performed some rituals, perhaps seeking permission of the local spirits to collect water from the lake. After an hour's rituals, Danil invited me to come near the lake and he waited for some time to receive the signal. Finally upon the appearance of some waves on the otherwise serene and still waters of the lake, Danil collected water in two bottles, as according to Altaian tradition even number is considered to be good. The Altai people do not have any tradition of written scriptures. Their rituals and traditions are in the oral form, having passed on from generation to generation by word of mouth only. According to Danil, knowledge of these rites and traditions comes to the chosen few from the spirits of the land, from earth and sky. Fire and wind are considered to be sacred. Danil is the only chosen Altaian master who can make or lead pilgrims to Sumeru. Churla, the horseman, is his junior follower and is still learning the Altaian rituals. After spending few hours at the foot of Sumeru and on the banks of the lake, we moved back to our camp and retired in our tents after having tea and dinner.

Next morning was sunny enabling us to have a clear view of Sumeru. After having breakfast, we packed our tents and rode back to the Karakol Park. This time the horses moved faster, keen to reach home early. In spite of the rains, we moved on putting our raincoats, descending from one hill to the other, till we reached the dense forests. On our return, we took a different route in order to complete our circumambulation (*parikrama*) around the Sumeru. About an hour's ride from the Park, we saw on the way beautiful lake with several tourists having come in jeeps/motorbikes. We reached the Uch Enmek Park at about 5 PM. On the way we saw a wooden sculpture of a mother waiting for her son to return from his job from home, made by a local artist. The memorial sculpture is a touching

tribute to the silent suffering and agony of parents waiting for their sons. On reaching the Park, we had *bania* (Russian sauna) which was quite refreshing and relieved the fatigue of five days trek/horse ride, and took adequate rest.

Next day in the evening ,a local Altai folk singer (*Kaichi*) treated us with his folk songs playing local instruments – flute, two stringed instrument etc. He recited *Om Mani Padme Hum* and also an ode to the holy Sumeru. Around 10 pm, after dinner, Danil performed the closing ceremony/thanks giving fire ritual in an *Ail*, in the Park. He lit fire, performed traditional rituals, offered milk, vodka and ghee to the fire. Each one of us did the same. The fire was very good, smokeless with full flame rising to the top of the *Ail*, thereby signaling the auspicious culmination of our pilgrimage to Sumeru.

I travelled to Altai again from 17 June to 1 July 2015, mainly to make my second pilgrimage to Sumeru. However, I used this opportunity to have the voluminous Altai Special issue of my journal *Himalayan and Central Asian Studies* (Vol. 18, Nos. 3-4, July-December 2014) released in Barnaul. On 18 June 2015,I and Dr. Irina, the Guest Editor of this Special issue met the Vice Rector of Altai State University, Barnaul and interacted with the faculty and local media. Next day the journal was formally released at a presentation ceremony at Altai Regional Library,Barnaul which was well attended by the local faculty, scholars and media. On 20 June 2015, I along with Dr. Irina left Barnaul in her car for On Gudai and stopped at Strotski town to have lunch (Bilenchikis and strawberries). We arrived at On Gudai and the Karakol Park in the evening and were warmly received by Danil, who has developed the Park further. Danil who is spearheading the movement for revival of Altai culture, served us traditional Altai food and salt tea with *satu*, which we also have in Kashmir.

On 21 June 2015, I was asked by Danil to perform the fire ritual (*yagna*) at the designated fire place in the Karakol Park. Danil and a local Shamanka Aliya started the ritual in the Altai tradition. They recited my name, family name, *gotra* , age etc. while performing the ritual. Danil lit the fire with just one match stick, with no need for putting camphor or ghee. The fire was lit in full speed and in full glow. Then I started reciting

my prayers to Lord Ganesha, Shiva and other deities and made my offerings of lotus seeds, flowers, raw sugar (*shakar*), barley, rice, honey, milk, ghee etc. to the deities and *agni* (fire). I did the ritual being on fast, without taking tea, water or breakfast. Danil and the Shamanka Aliya were happy about the fire ceremony being too good. Aliya even told Danil that she could feel the spirits(deities) accepting my offerings to them and *Agni*. Later on, after having my breakfast and lunch,I made a presentation about my first pilgrimage to Sumeru and also showed slides about the Hindu shrines in Kashmir to draw some parallels. In the evening , after dinner I showed my documentary *Shrines and Pilgrimages of Kashmir* (at the conference hall of Karakol Park) which was watched with keen interest and curiosity.

On 24 June 2015, Danil took myself, Dr. Irina and Alfred along with baggage in his car to the base camp. This time, Danil could not accompany us further, due to his work engagements in On Gudai. After loading our horses, we left the camp for Sumeru, wading through dense forests and flowing streams. The horseman Chichin was accompanied by his pet dog Mukhtar, who always led us from the front keeping his vigil around. After a ride of around four hours, we stopped at a point in the forest near a flowing water stream. After taking our food comprising of macroni, tinned fish,salad etc. we pitched our tents and went to sleep.

On 25 June 2015, we took breakfast/tea and packed our tents and loaded the baggage on our horses. We started our trek at 11 AM moving through dense forests, climbing steep mountain tracks, crossed a rivulet with pristine gushing waters, climbed again and passed through a plain land full of shrubs, till we reached a blue water lake. It was interesting and fun to watch the little dog Mukhtar struggle to cross the gushing riuvulet. He cried asking for help to let him cross and we asked the horseman Chichin to do so. But Chichin was confident that his dog would manage to overcome the hurdle. And Mukhtar did so by hopping over the gushing water and making another jump to cross the rivulet. He was so happy for accomplishing the daunted task and as an expression of his joy, Mukhtar rolled over the snow for quite some time. It was great fun to have his company on the trek. We stopped near the lake, pitched our

tents, prepared dinner and retired for sleep. From here Sumeru (west side) was visible. I could see several circles (*chakras*) formed by the natural formation of stones. But some time later, these were not visible.

On 26 June 2015, we rose early as usual and prepared for our next climb to Sumeru. We kept the tents pitched and started our upward trek, till we reached a height of about 10,000 feet. I faced some breathlessness and would take rest after every 30 minutes. We reached the Black water lake after which we had to move further to get to the White water lake. Local inspector Adbas came riding his horse asking us not to move further, as nobody was allowed to go to this sacred territory. Finally he let us go on knowing that a Hindu pilgrim from India had come to perform the ritual at Sumeru. Finally upon reaching the White lake, we stopped at a spot. I performed the fire ritual (*yagna*) with small pieces of dry wood, as this hill is barren devoid of any shrubs or trees. The fire was very good full of flames consuming all my offerings, with no smoke at all. I could feel that Sumeru and the deities had accepted my presence and modest offerings. Here at Sumeru, I could clearly see the images of Lord Shiva, Brhama and Vishnu appearing on the snow capped hills. I did not feel leaving the place pervaded with the divine atmosphere, with incense sticks and dhoop still burning. We started our descent at 4 pm. This time I had no difficulty in trekking and we reached our tents within an hour's time.

On 27 June 2015, after having breakfast we packed our tents and loaded baggage on horses and started our return trek to home (Karakol Park). This time we took a different route in order to complete the *parikrama* (circumambulation) of Sumeru. We crossed several rivulets, swampy wet lands full of bushes, went up and down several mounts. After about four hours horse ride, we stopped at a place where there was some water, had lunch and tea. Later we packed our goods and started our return journey for over two hours, till we reached the base camp. Here we unpacked our horse loads and waited till Chural came with a van to take us back to guest house. On arrival I had *bania* (hot sauna), which relaxed muscles. After dinner, we retired for sleep.

On 28 June 2015, Danil took me to meet the practicing Shamanka Olga Yerokhonova, who lives in Kalanda, about 40 minutes drive from



PROF. WARIKOO PERFORMING FIRE RITUAL AT KARAKOL PARK



ON THE WAY TO SUMERU, 30 JUNE 2014



VIEW OF SUMERU PARVAT, GORNYI ALTAI (29 JUNE 2014)

the Karakol Park. Olga is a teacher of English and performs rituals for the local Altaians at their request. She has written a book *Agaru*, explaining the natural, cultural and spiritual Aspects of Altai territory. She started practicing Shaman rituals since 1993, as after a sudden illness she suddenly found herself doing such rituals. There is no written script of mantras or recitations made by Altai shamans for their rituals. They believe that it comes naturally to them from earth and sky. She was happy about my coming to Sumeru, as it was a calling, and that I had to make three such pilgrimages in my life. She consoled me for the troubles caused to me by my detractors, whom I would always trust, help and treat as friends. She advised me to continue to work on the path chosen by me and that no harm would come to me. Danil was happy that I came and met Olga as she would not invite everybody to her home.

In the evening after dinner, Danil did the fire ritual in the designated *Ail* in the Park, as thanks giving ceremony for our successful pilgrimage to Sumeru. He asked me to begin the ritual by reciting the mantras. I lit the dhoop, incense sticks and offered mixture of ghee, milk and honey to the fire (*Agni*) and deities. Later on, Danil conducted the elaborate ritual,

the ceremony lasting form over two hours. The fire was so good,the flames reaching the top of the *Ail*, and no smoke.

On 30 June 2015,I left Karakol Park in Dr. Irina's car for Barnaul. After two hours drive , we arrived at Altai University guest house, had dinner and went to sleep. Next day (1 July 2015) morning, after early breakfast I left Barnaul for the Moscow and same day in the evening for Delhi by Aeroflot Airlines. While I recall the blissful and mesmerising experiences during my pilgrimages to Sumeru, my longing to revisit Sumeru becomes more and more intense.

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THE CULT OF MOUNTAINS

The Sacral Constant of Altai's Lanscapes

I.A. ZHERNOSENKO

In the studies on mythology and religions, it is common to speak about sacral and profane area gradation. For instance, the city temple and the city secular area accordingly generate the zones of space and chaos. According to the definition of M. Eliade, "The world is perceived like the World, the Space only as much as it is unveiled like the sacred world (...) human can live only in sacred world as only this world takes part in existence, in other words exists in reality."¹ The sacral space becomes itself on the strength of sacred presence in it.

The natives of Altai make a god of Nature in all its performances with a priori perception of expansion like "temenos" (Greek "the temple place"). In the terminology of American mythologist J.Campbell, Altai is perceived by its residents on the whole like a temple, the focus of the world, like "the wonder of perfect centrality", "the point of inexhaustibleness", where "someone opened the eternity". The focus of this "perfect centrality" of Altai is turning into reality the geographic localization of the Axis Mundi – the World Axis.

N.K. Roerich confirmed: "Altai – is the center of Asia"². "The center between four oceans exists"³. "The silver mountains – Sumyr, Subur, Sumbyr, Siberia-Sumeru. The same center of four oceans. There is the mountain in Altai on the right bank of the river Katun. Its value is equal to the world mountain Sumeru"⁴. N.K. Roerich told about Belukha mountain enduing it not without a reason with the features of the world mountain Sumeru. The artist and researcher mentioned about it being far

away from Altai: in Mongolia, India, Tibet during his Trans-Himalayan expedition. "People know about great times... Know about the Blessed coming to Altai. Know about Altai's value. Know about White Mountain..."⁵.

The main mountain peak of the Belukha Katun range is situated on the border of Russia and Kazakhstan. It's the special sacral place and mystic symbol for Altai and Old Believer Russian and Kazakh population since olden times. In historical past and present, Belukha is integral to the spiritual culture of Altai peoples.

Altai people endowed this mountain with different names. The traditional Altai name – is Kadyn Baji, that is the peak of Katun or "the head of Katun" (literally). It's appropriate for symbiotic symbolic relationship in the heavenly hierarchy of two geographical Altai objects: the highest mountain and the main sacred river. Russian analogue of place-name the Katun Pillars also points to the same connection of the river and mountain. That was the name of Belukha mountain from the first Old-Believer Russians who moved to Altai mountains. Afterwards, the new name Belukha was stated. According to the version of Tomsk University professor and the first researcher of Belukha glaciers V.V. Sapojnikov, this place-name has Russian origin. Russian peasants named this peak covered by eternal snow and by its unusually white peak. Altaians call it Ak-Sumyor – (White Sumeru), that is shining brightly. Kazakhs, living to the south-west from Belukha, called it *Mus-du-tau* (Ice Mountain) or *Ak-tau* (White Mountain) for glaciers shining brightly under the sun. In fact, Altai, Kazakh and Russian variations of place-names are calques of each other, they have the same definitions. There are also other names in Altai language, such as *Ak-Suru* ("with white water"), *Uch-Ayry* ("mountain with three branchings")⁶.

In Russian apocryphal work of the 14th century "About all creatures" the World Mountain is called adamantine. Adamant is the old Russian name of diamond. This metaphor is repeated in folk definitions: crystal mountain, glass, icy. In Slav's myths and fairy tales the hub of the universe is supposed to be "the Alaty Stone", from under it "quick rivers flow for the Whole World subsistence, for the Whole World healing". In the opinion

of prominent Belorussian linguist V.V. Martynov, the stone's name *Alatyr* is direct Slav calque from Iranian "al-atar", which literally means "white-combustible"⁷.

The symbolism of blinding shine contains the sense of spiritual cleansing and sacred origin. Since the old days in Russia knowledgeable people told: "In far off countries, beyond the great lakes, beyond the high mountains – there are the sacred place, where justice flourishes. Supreme knowledge and wisdom live there for rescuing all future mankind. This place is called *Belovodye* (White Water Land)"⁸.

By the legends of majority of the European nations, there is the Milky Lake by the foot of the World Mountain and the Milky River flows out of this lake. The Milky Lake in Altai is called Sjut-kol – the heavenly source of life. It is situated near Sumyor Mountain and mentioned in Altaic legends as well. "It is called Milky because milk – is a symbol of cleansing and sainthood among the cattle herders of Central Asia"⁹. It's amazing, that different mythological systems (Russian, Altaic, Buddhist), intersecting with each other, complementing one another, build harmonious non-controversial picture of the world.

In difficult times of religious and political persecutions, Russian people escaped far inland from weighty yoke of serfdom to impenetrable, blessed places. That way, where "milky rivers flow among jelly banks", where people live happily and where the world's mystery is saved. This Promised Land for Old Believers became Uymonskaya Valley and the Ak-Kem River Valley. This river flows from the same name lake by the foot of Belukha mountain.

In Turkic *Ak-Kem* means "White Water" and water in the river is really milky-white, opaque due to a vast number of mineral particles, which are collected by flows of thousand streams and rivers, flowing from the peaks of Belukha. The Ak-Kem river Valley is famous for its generous medicinal herbs, growing up to the human's height – "jelly" – hearty banks of milky river indeed! N.K. Roerich wrote in his travel notes during his Altai travels: "In the district of Ak-Kem there are traces of radioactivity. The water in Ak-Kem is milky-white. Clear Belovodye... (White Water) ". "The snow is white and the silver of Belukha-Mother is white. And all that sounds by Belovodye. Zvenigorod indeed"¹⁰ (See Fig.1).



FIG.1: *ALTAI BELOVODYE: THE AK-KEM RIVER FLOWS INTO THE KATUN RIVER. (PHOTO BY THE AUTHOR)*

The height of the Belukha mountain (4,506m) is estimated in pre-Soviet times. But local Old Believers understood without any measures, that Belukha was higher than the other peaks. They said: “all mountains appeared under the mountain” (See Fig.2).



FIG.2: *MOUNT BELUKHA. VIEW FROM THE KARA-TUREK PASS. (PHOTO BY THE AUTHOR)*

Belukha – it's a sacral place, which has important ethno-cultural value and mystic meaning in the eyes of local Altaic and Russian population, south-Altai Kazakhs and Old Believers. High snow mountains, which the Altaians try not to disturb without special need, were always treated with spiritual-mystic respect. In pre-Soviet times, nobody tried climbing the peaks, because the spirit of Altai, *Altai-eezi* lives on the highest peak. The Image of sacred Belukha in the world view of Altaians is surrounded by plenty of mystic limits. The Altaian hunters never hunt near Belukha. The ribbons (*kyira*) were tied and *oboo-tash* (hand-placed stones, sometimes sizeable) were built on the passes leading to the peak. But in a short distance from Belukha, ribbons or *oboo-tash* weren't tied in pre-Soviet times. Men could come to pray to Altai Master, but only before definite border by the foot of a mountain. Coming even closer to this border wasn't ever allowed for women.

There are many legends, myths, folk tales, folk beliefs, events as well as concise knowledge. Being in Altai in 1926, N.K. Roerich wrote: "There is a mountain in Altai, on the right bank of the Katun River, its value is equal to the World Mountain Sumeru"¹¹. "It is said, it's expected to be the last war in the world on Katun River. And after it will be a peaceful labor"¹². There is another legend about falling down all Belukha peaks before the end of the world. That's why when the outlines of two "spokes" (as the locals named its peaks) changed at the beginning of 20th century, it generated an anxiety among local population and activation of the national and religious movement which was formed into religious system of Burkhanism.

According to mythological and ecological traditions of Altaic, Russian and Kazakh population, all the sources under Belukha are healthy Arjans, which flow "for the healing of the whole world". The occurrences of yellow, grey, blue, white, red clays which are situated on the offshoots adjacent to Belukha are healing. This mountain is the beginning of the most beautiful Altaic rivers, there are the most popular natural objects – lakes and waterfalls.

To the south from Belukha, between the Black and White Berel rivers, in the territory of modern eastern Kazakhstan, not far from intersection

point of the four states Big Altai borders, there are famous Rahmanov's Springs – the healing mineral thermal underground sources with radon waters. The water of Rahmanov's Springs by its content is closer to Belokuriha waters (Altai Territory) and Tshaltubo Resort in Georgia. According to the modern chemical classification, it classifies as the group of low-salt nitric-siliceous healing waters and due to its curative power is equal to the water of above-mentioned resorts.

Most likely, the name of these magic sources was given by Russian Old-Believers, who brought apocryphal legends about Rahmans – wonderful blessed people, living in heavenly places: "Rahmans – are pious people, they live absolutely without acquiring... inhabit naked by the river and always praise God. They have neither four-legged, nor agriculture, iron, temples, fire, gold, vine, meat eating, tsar, buying, selling, quarrels, envy, theft, robbery.... They don't eager to satiety, but enjoy by sweet rain-water and they are free from any diseases and decay, are satisfied with a small amount of fruits and sweet water, and genuinely believe in God, and pray all the time"¹³. The legends about Rahmans have the form of fantastic stories about the blessed life of Brahmans or Indian Brahmins. In Christian legends they are shown like Bible-Christians. The famous Russian traveller and artist N.K.Roerich also made his contribution to the study of mysticism of Belukha and justification of geocultural relations of Altai and Himalayas, being in Verhniy Uimon village of Ust-Koksinskiy District in summer 1926. In the legends of the local Old-Believers about Belovodye, Roerich saw the analogue of Himalayan legends about Shambala, mystical country which opens only for the righteous and clarified: "The legendary mountain Meru according to Mahabharata and the same legendary height Shambala in Buddhologies – both lay to the North...."¹⁴. "Indeed, Altai-Himalayas – two magnets, two balances, two foundations"¹⁵.

Searching the beginnings of Belovodye legends, the scientist came to conclusion that "... on the basis of information about Belovodye the message from Buddhistic world is lay. The same center of life studying (Shambala - IZ) reinterprets by Old Believers. The way between Argun and Irtysh leads to the same Tibet"¹⁶. In the consciousness of researcher, the definitions

“Buddha” and “Altai” are tied seamlessly: “Altai Mountains are associated with the name of Buddha. It is said that the Blessed after visiting Hotan, visited the great Altai where the sacred Belukha is situated”¹⁷. Looking at the ruins of Buddhist temples and stupas, he noticed: “Through exactly these places Buddha was passing by himself during his way to Altai”¹⁸.

Nicolay Konstantinovich and Elena Ivanovna Roerich quite often mentioned in their writings about Northern Shambala – Altai. In Uymon, Roerich found out about the real travels to Shambala (*Belovodye*). “Atamanov’s grandfather and Ognev’s father went searching Belovodye...In 1923 Sokoliha with Bukhtarma people¹⁹ went in search of Belovodye. Nobody came back but nearly the letter from Sokoliha was received. She writes that she wasn’t in Belovodye, but lives well. But she doesn’t write where she lives. All people know about *Belovodye*”²⁰.

The concept of the World Axis which is the embodiment of perfect entity of cosmiurgiya – constance and dynamics – which is based on number’s “seven” semantics is, implemented in Altai into geographic and historic-cultural realities. The sacral number “seven” corresponds to six directions of space and Centre: vertical Triad – three-part (three-floor) Universe construction and four directions of terrestrial space. The tetrad (entity of four space directions) in the world’s model, embodies the image of “static integrity”, embodied constant of the world order.

According to researchers, semantics of four corner terrestrial space embodies in Turks’s memorial fences, which are rubbleworks, limited from four sides (oriented to the cardinal directions) by stone slabs, with stele or big rock in the center or with remainders of wooden table. In this construction the features of Axis Mundi are presented clearly and that is more accentuated by *balbals* – rock sculptures with tetrahedral form of initial monolith, which are saved near the steles²¹.

The actualization of Triad idea (the entity of three worlds: heaven, terrestrial and underground) contains one more sense: “dynamic perfection (origin – developing – completion)”²², embodied by the most full time aspect Axis Mundi – the World Tree. Combining of these two world model’s aspects is visualized in Karakol Valley, which is under Uch Enmek mountain (during the rituals Altaians call Sumeru exactly this mountain).

The mountain, which clearly embodies the features of the World Mountain, is situated on the Terektinskiy Range – Bay Terek in Altaic (Golden Poplar) – The World Tree of Altaians.

The other peaks also serve the same function of the World Axis in Altai. On the southern tip of the Teletskiy Lake there is the sacred peak – *Altyn-tu* (Golden Mountain). According to the legend, there is the throne of Ulgen – the heaven demiurge. He created the world and then went to *Altyn-tu* in order to rest after the difficult matter.

The mountains, especially with high peaks, which are covered by snow patches and glaciers, were always a subject of sacred honour for the locals. There existed strict rules of behavior on mountain passes, there speaking loudly, making noise, listening to music was not allowed. In pre-revolutionary times the traditions were kept, many Altain hunters perfectly knew mountain paths, including all the ways to snow passes, but they reached only the feet of reserved mountains. They called them the common name *Iyik*.

The variation of the World Mountain Mythologema in Altai is the cult of generic mountains. The mountain in Altai is revered like origin creature, always existing, before humans' appearance. It forms the basis of world order and life provider of Altaians, serves as maternal bosom for *seok* (breed), is its protection. The breed mountain is called *tyos* – “the root” of the breed. Each *seok* honors its breed mountain: Chalkans, Tubalars – Abakan mountain, Telengits – the snow peak *Kyok-Iiyk*, Todosh breed – *Babyrgan* mountain, *Chapty* breed – *Chapty-kan* mountain, *Kypchak* breed – *Irbis-Tu* mountain, *Tonjaan* breed – *Adygan* mountain and so on. In Altaic (as well as in many other Turkic languages) the words “*tu*” – “mountain” and “*tuu*” – “give birth” are in tune. Quite often it is possible to hear how Altaians call their breed mountains: *Irbistu* – *Irbistuu*; *Altyntu* – *Altyn-Tuu*; *Baytu* – *Bay-Tuu*, *Karatu* – *Kara-Tuu*, *Kyzyltu* – *Kyzyl-Tuu* and so on.

By Altaians' beliefs, in Spring, the Breed mountain “undo buttons” and releases the souls of the people, animals and birds; and they go into it (freedom) after finishing the way of all things. The authors of collective monograph *Traditional world view of the Southern Siberia Turks* confirm,

that it was practiced to bury one breed's members in rockslides of one of the spurs"²³. There existed the Tuvan proverb, which defines the borders of human's life: "In yurta are born, die under the rock".

In Altaian mythopoetics one commonly finds the subjects about birth of epic heroes inside the mountain, about presence of the souls of heroes in the mountain, heroes exit in the mountain (in after life) or on the contrary the presence of Bogatyr's horse and munition inside the mountain before definite period of time and so on. Very likely, this mythopoetic tradition of Turkic people is closely connected with older traditions of Scythian-Siberian world: burial of their rulers and heroes with all their belongings and treasures in artificially created mountains-mounds by their tribesmen. This tradition continued in Turkic medieval mound burial places, Turks were buried in mounds of Scythian times and group rock burials on the Sayan-Altai territory.

In Central Altai on the head of the Karakol river, there is Uch Enmek mountain, which is revered by the locals as sacred. Its translation from Altaic means "Three Sinciputs". Three ranges capped by peaks are situated one by one by the axis North-South, forming the crown or "Three Sinciputs" in the Terekty Range. Locals suppose, that definitely through these "Three Sinciputs" like through baby's soft spot, energetic and spiritual exchange of the Earth planet takes places with the Space. The name of another mythological Axis of Altai, World Tree is *Bay-Terek* (Golden Poplar). It may be noted that larch-trees and spruces grow on the slopes of Terekty range and there is not a single poplar for giving a name to this oronym (*terek* – Altaic "poplar"; "terekty" – "with poplars, having poplars"). But if one looks at the outlines of Uch Enmek mountain on the map, their similarity with the big crown tree and developed root system is evident (See Figs. 3, 4). The people of Karakol Valley remember in their memories that people who searched Iron or Stone tree there, came to the Valley.

Another Altaic definition of Uch-Enmek Peak is *Jerdyn Kyndigi* (The Cord of the Earth), which is the connotation of the especially revered Mother Goddess Umay cult in Altai. The Nature of Umay is doubled: terrestrial – she is introduced like the old woman, taking care of women in labor and babies, and heaven maiden, who sends embryos of future



FIG. 3. THE OUTLINES OF UCH ENMEK MOUNTAIN IN THE MAP OF ONGUDAI TERRITORY



FIG. 4. UCH ENMEK PEAK

children into mothers' womb. Under her control are the cord, which is closely physically connected with mother and a baby and soft spot connecting a child, his spiritual essence – *kut* – with Heaven Mother – Umai. Absolutely identical in itself, is the honoring of Uch Enmek mountain by Altaians. Its name means "Three Sinciputs" and functional value of

mountain – is the cord of the Earth Planet.

To sum up this research: the mountainous cult, the mythologeme of the World Mountain in Altai has been significant for the natives dwelling in a place for a long time, in view of its geographical peculiarities and mental specifics of its residents, forming their world view constants and are visually embodied in the location of the sacred peaks of Belukha, Uch Enmek, Altyn Tu and generic mountains. The Cult of Generic Mountains in its turn is the variation of World Mountain mythologeme, forms ethnic-cultural constants of Altaians, providing their socio-cultural identity.

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SACRED WATERS OF ALTAI

L.N. MUKAEVA AND M.A. OSTANINA

ABSTRACT

The article analyzes the cult of sacred waters of Altai, as the most important component of the sacred and real Altai and the concept of “a small motherland” in general. All water reservoirs like rivers, lakes, springs and Arzhan-Suu are sacred for the indigenous population of Gorny Altai. These are worshipped and prayed, for these are places to conduct rituals with the use of rules that are many centuries old. Such understanding of holy waters of their land came to the Altai people from ancient times together with mythology and shamanism as their ancient belief. Among all rivers of Altai, the Katun is the most sacred and mysterious symbol that plays important role in historical past and present, and is significant for the spiritual culture of all peoples of Altai. The Katun river is given the most honorable place in Altai mythology. It is connected with a series of legends about Sartakpai, an Altai builder and creator. This work studies sacred waters as symbols of Altai having long history and rich culture.

Keywords: Altai mythology, indigenous people of Altai, rivers as an image of their homeland, oceans, healing springs, Sacred Arzhan, yarlykchi, Altai toponymy, water as remedy, prohibitions about behavior at rivers.

On the map of Gorny Altai (Altai Republic), there is a drawing of several thousands of large and small rivers and lakes that together form a fanciful pattern, similar to the lines in a human palm. All large and small rivers, as well as lakes of the Altai mountains are connected by means of inextricable real, spiritual and sometimes mystical bonds with people who have been living in the Altai mountains: the indigenous inhabitants (northern Altai: Kumandins, Tubalars, Chelkans; southern Altai: Altai Kizhi, Telengits, Telyos), Old Believers and old-timers. The largest Katun river with its tributaries flows through the southwestern and central parts of the region:

the Koksa, Argut, Chuya, Ursul, Sema; and through the western part, where we see the Peschanaya, Anuy, Charysh rivers. In the south-eastern Altai, the main river is the Chulyshman that connects two large lakes of Dzhulu-Kul and Teletskoye, and there is the Biya river that flows from the latter. Into the Biya, other rivers of the eastern Altai such as the Lebed flow.

It has already been noted in different research works that in the Altai-Sayan high elevations, mountainous rivers as well as bodies of water, in general, always had different meaningful and functional significance compared to rivers in plains and steppes¹. In the pre-Soviet epoch, the place of residence of indigenous people and later of Old Believers and old-timers was along river basins. N.A. Tadina, a modern scholar and ethnographer, calls groups of members at one place of residence, who also have the same features of economic and life activities and belong to the same material, spiritual and religious culture, a local territorial unit of ethnos². At the same time, the author emphasizes that the local communities in specific river systems differ from each other by their generic composition, speech intonation, ethno-psychological type, and even by phenotypic features. Traditionally, when a member of the native community met a person, he told his name and names of his parents, mentioned the family clan or *seok* he belonged to (*seok* lit. 'a bone') and necessarily named the river as a place of his birth, residence and ethnic and territorial affiliation³.

So, the southern Altai people, consisting of Altai-Kizhi and Telengits, and the northern Altaians (Kumandins, Tubalars, Chelkans) are localized along river valleys. Telengits have long been developing the southern territory of eastern Altai and southern Altai. Currently, they live in compact groups in Kosh-Agach and Ulagan Districts of the Altai Republic. The Kosh-Agach Telengits are divided into Chuy Telengits, settled along the upper reaches of the Chuya river and Arkhyt (Argut) Telengits, who live along the Argut river. Ulagan Telengits live along the middle and lower reaches of the Chuya, they also live in Ulagan high elevations and in the Chulyshman valley. They are divided into Bashkaus and Chulyshman Telengits. Altai-Kizhi are settled in river basins of Ongudai, Ust-Kan, Ust-Koksa, Shebalino, Chemal Districts of the Altai Republic

and occupy the middle reaches of the Katun river and the basins of its tributaries – Ursul, Sema, Maima, as well as in the river system of Charysh, Kan and Peschanaya. In Ongudai District, they are divided into Karakol, Ursul, Yaloman Altai people, in Ust-Kan District – into Kan-Yabogan and Charysh, in Ust-Koksa District – into Abay and Uymon, in Shebalino District – into Cherga and Beshichi Altai people. We see that in all cases, the name of the ethnic-local group corresponds with river valleys⁴.

Ethnic territorially-based localization along river systems is inherent to the population in northern Altai, too. Chelkans, who are the northern Altai group, settled on the Lebed, the right tributary of the Biya river, and its tributaries, the main being the Baigol, Sadra, and Atla creeks. Chelkans have the self-name Kuu-Kizhi, which means “people of the Lebed”. The descendants of the ancient population of Altai and Turkic people of southern Siberia are Kumandins who inhabited the Biya basin since ancient times. During the pre-Soviet time they lived in two districts – Nizhne-Kumandinskaya (now Krasnogorsky and Soltonsky districts of the Altai Krai) and Upper-Kumandinskaya Volosts (now Turochak District of the Altai Republic). The ethnic group of the north-east Altai that is called Tubalars occupies the territories along the rivers of Biya, Bolshaya Isha, Malaya Isha, Sary-Koksha, Kara-Koksha, Pyzha and Uymen. Small part of Tubalars in former Kergezhszkaya Volost (now Kebezen village) used to move from place to place along the northern bank of lake Teletskoye.

N.A. Tadina states that this particular tradition among the Altai local national groups to name themselves according to river valleys where they settle, carries information about the socio-cultural and socio-economic characteristics of every such local community. River valleys, in which the indigenous inhabitants lived in small settlements, were interpreted by them as family-clan lands, as their small homeland – Altai. A river in this case acts as an image of the motherland⁵.

The same tradition of naming themselves with reference to names of rivers was adopted by newcomers: by Old Believers who settled in river valleys of high altitude areas of Altai since the second half of the 18th century, and old-timers, who began to organize villages in the Altai mountains since the beginning of the 19th century. The Old Believers used

to live in rocky troughs of the southern slopes of the Katun range and used to call themselves "stone people" [Russian *Kamenschiki*, from *kamen* "stone (mountain)"]. Still, later they settled in the wide Katun valley below the place where the Koksa creek flows into the Katun. The upper Katun was called Uymon by the Altai people. The Old Believers were influenced by their Altai neighbors and later began to call their villages as Upper Uymon (1796-1798) and later – Lower Uymon (1820-1830), and called themselves as Uymon Old Believers, or Uymon people (Russian *Uymontsy*).

Rivers and lakes have even more significance for the Altai indigenous people, for they represent the very sacred Altai. Water elements (rivers) take the second place in importance after mountains being a component of the mythological (sacred) and the real Altai. Water elements are part of the whole concept of "small homeland" in the indigenous population of this region, and part of the concept of "Land-Water"⁶. If we state that a river helps to express the notion of motherland in the perception of the Altai people, then the mythopoetic image of river is confirmed by the sacred and spiritual practice of these people. This understanding came from the very early centuries together with mythology and shamanism that was their ancient belief. Although, researchers take notice that shamanistic mysteries are most often devoted to the spirits of the sacred mountains of Altai, but the cult of water was most fully represented in traditional mythology⁷.

So, the water element is most often represented by a river, and less frequently by a sea, ocean, lake or a spring, and is one of the most important symbols of the Altai mythology. Together with the rest of the elements, they comprise the core of the mythological Universe⁸. Water was one of the fundamental principles, the source of the Universe, and therefore the source and the fundamental principle of life on earth.

As the Altai epic about the creation of the Universe says, Ulgen was flying over the shoreless sea (the world lake), in which there lived "the sacred mother" – Umai-Ene the Progenitress, who took part in creation of the earth, and then the sky. Then they created the three-level world with the upper (heavenly) world for gods, the middle world for the man and the lower world, being the underworld. The third layer of the sky, where

the sons of Ulgen live, there is the main sacred source in the Altai mythology – Syut-kol, a milk lake. It is from here that the goddess White Mother [Altai *Ak Ene* or *Umai (Ene)*] appears with her golden hair loose⁹. Professor A.M. Sagalaev, a famous ethnographer, notes that much of the ancient Turkic myths has been forgotten, but these images of goddess Mother and her milk lake from the heroic myth have survived. In the Altai model of the upper world, the milk lake is an inexhaustible primary source of life on earth and a paradise for righteous souls¹⁰. The lake is guarded by the golden-haired goddess Umai Mother, the blue bull and the giant fish Ker-Balyk. The symbol of the milk lake Syut-kol in the spiritual and mystical practice of the Altai shamans is the bowl, from which they sprinkle milk during sacrifices¹¹. It is believed that Syut-kol is not the only source in the upper world. The heroic epic also describes a white river (in some cases, a blue river), on the shores of which there is a white palace. This river has mutually exclusive features: it flows and does not flow. Professor A.M. Sagalaev gives the following interpretation for this: such river is a border into another world and denotes its timelessness¹².

We find that the symbol of sea is widely represented in the Altai mythology, too. A.M. Sagalaev asks the question: Why does the Altai mythology keep symbols of sea (vast ocean) and numerous references to sea (ocean), when the place where the Altai people settle is equally away from all four closest oceans? It is really so that we often encounter places in the Altai epic literature that refers to seas being located on the edge of the world that block the way of heroes or *baatyr*s (Altai *baatyr* ‘a hero, a strong man’). According to A.M. Sagalaev, the symbols “the vast ocean” and “the wide sea” from the Altai myths refer to an unordered, spontaneous beginning that also means “flooding”, “tides”, “bottomless whirlpool”¹³. The creation of the world, described in the Altai mythology, is followed by the appearance of the earth that is surrounded on all its sides by water in the shape of “black”, “blood-like”, “bottomless seas and lakes”, “swamps and distant rivers”. In the underworld there is “the black sea full of tears from eyes”, “the stormy black sea”, “the red sea full of blood from chest”, “the swamps of clay and mud”, “the boiling black lake”, “the boiling black hell”, “the rippling black sea”, “the spinning black

ocean". According to A.M. Sagalaev, all types of water elements are manifestations of indomitable strength and power of the primary ocean. Only shaman deals with these terrible ponds of the lower world¹⁴. As we see, the images of "sea", "ocean", "river", or just "water" express the state of being fluid, changeable, in a chaos, disorder, with no definite shape, what is specific of the world, which is at the moment of being created. The researcher emphasizes that water is the element that serves best to convey the idea of primeval chaos in the Altai traditional mythology. But there is also order in this disorder. The earth is on the backs of three great fish that have been created by the supreme deity of Ulgen. The two of them are on the sides, the third one is in the center under the earth, with its head directed to the north. Any tip of the head of the fish in the center causes floods and tides on earth. There is White Mother (*Ak Ene / Umai*) in the ocean who gives life on earth¹⁵.

The lower world is under the rule of the deity of Erlik. There is a mystical river Toibodym running from all water bodies of this world. But where is this river? It is not anywhere. Such river does not exist on earth. Still, this river is known from the Altai myth, which tells that sea monsters Abra and Tutpalar live on the banks of the Toibodym, and they guard the palace of Erlik. At the bottom of Toibodym there are bones of dead people and shamans. The river is filled with tears and blood of living and dead people, and this reveals the connection of this mythical legend with the funeral rites of the Turkic peoples of Southern Siberia¹⁶. According to some reports, Toibodym is the river of boiling blue water with nine tributaries¹⁷. This river separates the world of the living and the dead and flows underground toward the dwellings of Erlik, it connects the upper and the lower worlds. There is a bridge made of hair across it. Shamans use this bridge to travel to the kingdom of Erlik. According to the legends of the Altai people, souls of people, when crossing the hair bridge, fall off this bridge into the Toibodym, afterwards they never return back to the world of the living and remain in the lower world.

There are several points of view upon the name of the Toibodym in research literature (Altai *toibodym* 'I am not fully fed'). This mythical river absorbs all the negative and was called Toibodym, what is interpreted as

'being never fed enough', 'insatiable'¹⁸. As the Altai people say, the day the Toibodym satisfies its hunger, it will put an end to the world on the planet. Archpriest Vasily I. Verbitsky, a missionary in Altai (1853 – 1890) and the first Altai ethnographer, used this term to denote the World Ocean and the Ob river¹⁹. Pictures of Grigory I. Choros-Gurkin, the Altai artist and writer, depict the kingdom of Erlik in the lower reaches of the Ob with such explanations: "Toibodym is the ocean (insatiable)", below it there is the element of flood – "chaik", above it there is "Tengis – the sea (with high water)" and "the Ob (deep)"²⁰.

So, on the one hand, water in the Altai myth that tells about the creation of the world is associated with chaos, danger and the lower world, and is the boundary, beyond which begins the unknown. On the other hand, water is a construction material and life-giving power. Such ambivalent attitude of the epic tradition on the water element is pointed out by A.M. Sagalaev²¹.

The same ambivalent attitude towards water (rivers, lakes) is observed not only in mythology, but also in the real life of the Altai society. For indigenous people, mountainous rivers were difficult obstacles; most of the population didn't know how to swim in pre-Soviet times²². Crossing rivers was connected with danger both because of being close to the different (lower) world, and because of the real threat of death. There is even a wish, which is given to people, who need to cross a river, as a courtesy in common life: "If you have a big river (on your way), let it be possible to cross it"²³.

Travel diaries of pre-Soviet researchers K.F. Ledebur, A.A. Bunge, who visited Gorny Altai as part of a floristic expedition in 1826, P.A. Chihachev, who made a geological trip to this region in 1842 and V.V. Radlov describe many dangerous crossings of large and small rivers of the Altai. A.A. Bunge writes about his failure to cross the turbulent Charysh on July 7, 1826²⁴. On 30 July, 1826, his guides had to save his horse from drowning, when they were crossing the Bashkaus river, the left tributary of the Chulyshman²⁵. On August 13, A.A. Bunge and his expedition were crossing the Katun river near Kor-Kochu, whose waters were even higher because of heavy rains. The scientist recalls: "The crossing was extremely

dangerous. The boat was once drawn by waters very close to the lower rapids, and when it was my turn to cross, the boat tilted to one side, and so much water got inside of the boat that we almost went down to the bottom. On both banks of the river we see grateful sacrifices of the Kalmyks (Altai) to denote their happy crossing of the river – these are ribbons and pieces of cloth tied to branches of the trees. Rejoiced that I managed to cross, I also tied a large ribbon to a branch of one of the trees, and was approved by doing so on part of the Kalmyks (Altai) who accompanied me then”²⁶.

Crossing the smaller rivers also caused a lot of trouble, especially when they were flooded after heavy rains. K.F. Ledebur mentions that on 18 June 1826, his guides from the Altai people reluctantly agreed to cross the white waters of the Kumir creek in a small boat: “they couldn’t agree upon starting such a risky enterprise. ... they decided to cross the river only after many persuasions and hesitations, and, of course, only because their horses were already on the other side of the river. Unwilling to see the danger that they were exposed to, they squatted down at the bottom of the boat and bowed their heads low, not to see the water”²⁷.

Crossing the Katun, in which the water rose high from rains, was very hard for P.A. Chihachev²⁸. According to his description, there were two Cossacks, who used to take people and cargo from the left to the right bank of the Katun, and the two Cossacks had made fifteen trips across the fast waters of the river. The horses had to swim. Finally, “the people and horses were completely exhausted”, but were on the other side of Katun, even “the brave Cossacks were fully exhausted”. This made P.A. Chihachev order to stay at that place until the next day. For safe crossing of the river, both Altai guides and the scientist tied *kyira*-ribbons onto the bushes as a sign of thankful sacrifice²⁹.

Researcher V.V. Radlov with his wife and companions looked with fear at the small boat that was to carry them to the other side of the Katun. Later he writes that: “The noise of the waves stunned us, as if they were falling on us, the water splashed into our faces, we were dashing forward with the speed of an arrow. When we came to our senses again, we were already on the other side of the Katun”³⁰.

We come across Professor A.M. Sagalaev's words that the water element, being very important, remained somehow a detached element for the inhabitants of the Altai mountains³¹. We can say that the rivers in northern Altai were used for transportation, and the local population was engaged in fishery. The Altai people, who lived in the south, treated fish as a symbol of the underworld, therefore, they didn't go fishing.

The Altai rivers of main water basins in this region, such as the Katun, Biya, Kan-Charysh and Chulyshman-Bashkaus basins form a solid blue water net. When the indigenous society gave names to the water reservoirs, they paid attention to natural and physical characteristics of rivers and lakes. We remember such words of V.I. Verbitsky: "The Altai Mountains are cut by rivers, creeks and springs, which either humbly wash the roots of mountains, or noisily rush on the ranges and splash their foam in waterfalls"³².

When the Russian population arrived in the region, the hydronyms gained male and female meanings. As for the lake toponyms, the Altai people tried to give their lakes beautiful names. For instance, Dyarashkol (Altai 'a beautiful lake'), Daingol (modern name – Manzherok) (Altai 'Prince Lake'). Maps of 16th and early 17th centuries briefly mention the high mountains far in the south of Western Siberia with the name *Lukomorskie Gory* [Russian *lukomorye* 'curved shore of the sea', (figurative) 'dream place at the suburb of the Universe'], i.e., distant poorly-known mountains, among which there is a giant lake. Siegmund F. von Herberstein, the Austrian author of *Notes on Muscovy* (Latin *Rerum Moscoviticarum Commentarii*) called this lake Chinese Lake (*Kithay*) that was the source for the huge Ob river 80 versts wide. On the map, we see Lukomorye, next to Chinese lake, Herberstein placed a tree, from under whose roots a spring of living water flows³³. Pyotr Sobansky, a Boyar son, was sent to north-eastern Altai in 1633 to reach the upper reaches of the Biya and Chinese lake. He found out that the lake from which Biya flows was called *Altyn-Kyol* by the local Altai tribes and *Altyn-nor* by the Dzungars. Both terms mean 'golden lake' in the Altai (Turkic) and Dzungarian (West Mongolian) languages.

But P. Sobansky in his description of the lake and Biya proposed to

name this lake as Telessky, for *Teles* was the name of the people, who inhabited its shores. Thus, the author of the new hydronym *Telesskoye* (*Telezhs koye*), which later transformed into Teletskoye, was Pyotr Sobansky, the service man and explorer from Tomsk³⁴. Johannes G. Grano, the Finnish-Russian scientist, studied the basin of lake Teletskoye for two weeks in 1913. Later he recalled: "Such a powerful (lake) cannot be found. ... gloomy, icy-cold water fills its depths. What a depressing grandeur of nature". The attitude of the local population to "the wonderful sight of the most beautiful land" surprised the scientist³⁵. To support the truthfulness of his words, J. Grano cites the Russian translation of a song composed by Tubalars about their lake³⁶:

*Altyn-Kyol is beautiful!
A haze is blowing over its surface,
Its slopes are beautiful,
Wrapped in black woods.
Its fish are tasty that feed its people
The game is big in woods,
To get which the people go*

Researchers compared Grano's translation of this Tubalar song with another version of the translation into Russian, which is found in the composition *Memorial Testament* by Mikhail V. Chevalkov, the first Altai clergyman, a missionary and enlightener³⁷:

*How beautiful is Golden Lake
With its spreading white fog!
How delicious are its fish,
Which it feeds its people with³⁸*

There is a third most complete version of the translation into Russian of this song, recorded by A.V. Anokhin, the famous local historian, at the beginning of 20th century³⁹:

*You are glorious you, Golden Lake,
You are like a deep sea.
The high taiga along your shores.*

*And admires in your mirror
The yellow and bottomless sky.
It's good to look at your trees,
It's good to look at flying birds.
Glorious Golden Lake, good,
And fish of yours are sweet, tasty,
And better than these fish there are nowhere else.*

Altai Turks and their predecessors acquired the right spatial understanding of the Katun, Biya, Ob and other rivers. The fact that almost all Altai rivers flow from south to north has formed a particular spatial perception of their place in real habitat: the native will always say "I came from the upper parts"⁴⁰.

Of all rivers of the Altai mountains, the main one Katun is the sacred and mystic symbol, which plays an important role in the historical past and present, in the spiritual culture of all peoples of Altai. In Altai mythology this river takes an honorable place. The main river of Altai is connected with an entire cycle of legends about Sartakpai, the Altai builder. In Altai epics and legends we trace its way from the foot of Belukha Mount, the highest peak of Altai, and learn about its indomitable, impetuous nature, its dangerous rapids, unusual power and speed, smashing all obstacles in its ways. Ancient and medieval story tellers didn't restrain their imagination, when they described the river of Katun, and told about it a lot, what would surely have escaped the attention of modern man. The holy Katun is the first Altai river in terms of its socio-economic, historical and cultural significance. On its banks there are some rich Old Believers' villages in higher parts of the mountains, settlements of the indigenous people, old-timers' villages and villages of newcomers.

The Katun basin is figuratively called by J.G. Grano "the heart of the mountain country"⁴¹. The artist and writer G.I. Choros-Gurkin also describes it similarly: "... amid this mighty enchanted kingdom, among the majestic nature, among the grandeur of the blue mountains, amid the dense, dark woods, along the gentle valleys full of fragrant flowers, along the golden bottom of the Altai, there is this emerald beauty – the Katun. It has cut its way deep into the very heart of the Altai and between the

troughs it shows its blue serpentine ribbon. The stormy and restless river, it has pressed firmly to the giant's chest and is rushing forward with noise... It seems as though no power exists to stop it flowing, and there are no barriers to cease its striving and mighty running..."⁴².

The Katun flows down from the Gebler's glacier, at the highest Katun range and first flows from east to west, then it moves round the Katun range with a huge loop from west to east. This Katun loop received a few figurative names in the 20th century, among which we find "the horseshoe of the Katun", "the necklace of the Katun", and the descriptions always point out the white-milky color of the water. The Altai population called the upper reaches of Katun river by the name Uymon, the border of which was the confluence of the blue Koksa river, translated as 'a bend, a curve'. The name of Uymon gave the name to the steppe, along which Katun (*or* the Uimon) flows – the Uymon steppe. The traditional name of Katun river in Altai is *Kadyn*, and the name of Belukha is *Kadyn-Bazhi* (Altai 'the top, the head of the Katun'), which corresponds with the inextricable sacred connection of the two spiritual symbols of the Altai mountains: the connection between the highest mountain and the main sacred river of the region. The analogue that testifies the same connection between the river and the mount is in the Russian toponym *Katunskiye Stolby* (Russian 'pillars of the Katun')⁴³.

The winding bed of the largest river in south-eastern Altai determined this river's name – the Chulyshman *or* Cholushman (Altai 'an earthworm'). V.V. Radlov also drew attention to the extraordinary sinuosity of this river: "In the valley this river coils like a snake; for its twisting and turning tortuously, probably, the river got its name"⁴⁴. On the left, its largest tributary, the Bashkaus flows into the Chulyshman. A legend tells that in the valley near the mouth of the Bashkaus, a Telengit shaman of great strength was buried in ancient times. At the burial site there is a birch growing⁴⁵. As for the hydronym of *Biya*, it means 'lord', but there is also a Tubalar name for it – *Oon*.

In the Altai spiritual and religious practice, water (Altai *suu*) is sacred in all its manifestations and should be worshiped. In the life of indigenous people the cult of sacred waters (rivers, lakes, springs, sacred *Arzhan-Suu*)

plays a big role. No wonder that G.I. Choros-Gurkin was trying to create a microcosm of the Altai nature in his residence in Anos village, and an important part of that landscape became a stream that was running along an artificial channel and filling a miniature pond⁴⁶. The artist dedicated his famous paintings to the sacred waters of his homeland – “Lake of Mountain Spirits”, “The Crown of the Katun”, “The Katun in Spring” and others. These names of his canvases have become brands of Gorny Altai.

The Katun is frequent in the artist’s works. For several decades of his creative life, he had been living on the banks of this river. He describes Katun as a symbol of the Altai: “Autumn. ... Majestically, being conscious of its strength and nobility, the radiant Katun is sailing between the festive shores. No longer is it making much of the violent noise now as it would in spring, but in an elegiac and quiet manner is rolling down its turquoise waves”. Only at autumn in Anos, Grigory Gurkin could have written these words: “It is calm, good and peaceful around. One can feel that some great charms are ripening in nature. The chest is breathing freely, and the soul is eager to fly somewhere in delight towards the inaccessible heights, towards another being, another world, the realm of thoughts and dreams, towards the unknown and desirable happiness... The migrating guests, summer residents, have long flown away, leaving colorful memories of themselves behind. ... Occasionally, in no hurry, some hunters would ride along the cornice of the river’s hanging bank, smoking pipes in their mouths. ... And again, everything is so quiet. Again there is the whisper of nature, again the waves of delicate colors are swaying. ... Again we hear songs of the Katun full of enchantment and tenderness. Again we are in dreams and our souls fly. The chest is breathing lightly and with freedom, nothing gloomy comes to bother our soul. Before us, in perpetual motion, there is the noble boiling wave – the mountain river is breathing, it is living. The shores have even a brighter and more picturesque reflection in the glittering of the river-boat yard⁴⁷.”

Researcher N.A. Tadina states that in Altai society a river is given three most important signs: it is spiritualized, it has its master – the Spirit of water, and it is an object of veneration and worship. According to the

Altai mythological ritual tradition, each water-body (river, lakes, source) is anthropomorphic. For this reason, any river is treated like a living being. The source of the river is called "the head". The ritual of acquaintance with the river is mandatory. During this ritual, a person should scoop some water with his right hand and pour it to the shore the number of times that is even, then he bathes slightly his head as a sign of wishing it well-being and throws white coins in it (if he has any). One should never step over "the head" of a spring. Other prohibitions include washing yourself over the water, washing clothes or washing up in a creek, scooping water with movement of your hand against the current. It was forbidden to settle in the upper reaches and at the mouth of a river. The researcher notes that when the Altai people began to live the settled style of life, they preferred middle parts of rivers for settlement, while the Russian population chose estuary valleys. The Altai people did not use bad words to refer to rivers, even if they suffered from severe floods or tides. All their actions emphasized respectful attitude to rivers and to water in general⁴⁸.

We find more material about prohibitions with regard to water. Rivers in the Altai epic tradition are interpreted as "borders between the worlds". According to the Altai beliefs, when one crosses a river, it means a transition from one world to another. Such an understanding led to a number of prohibitions and regulations in the Altai society. Dead people could not be transported across rivers, neither were people in mourning allowed to cross them. Since people believed that river banks had opposite properties, then they could move from one shore of the river to the other to avoid misfortunes of their family, such as illnesses of cattle. This belief is supported by another practice. As soon as the river is an opposite world, the Altai people thought that any immersion of a person into water changes his condition: if he is sick, then "the river will take away his misfortune and give prosperity to the family", if he is healthy, then it will take his health⁴⁹. The river is a boundary between the earthly life, beyond which there is the entrance to the underworld, through which all what is offered at sacrifices is accepted. Thus, the river (water), combining the past, present and future, the upper and lower worlds, the world of the living and the world of the dead, is an important component of the world and picture of

the universe of indigenous people of Altai. Like other symbols of the Altai mythology, the river has been used for innumerable plots⁵⁰.

The owner of a water-body (a river) is a spirit called *Suu Eezi*, who is either a woman, or a young girl, or even a gray-bearded old man. According to some beliefs, the mistress of a river is a snake, bringing water on its head. There is even a rule that prohibits killing a snake in a river⁵¹. The Altaians believe that the Spirit of Water, as the creator of the entire space in water, is above evil and good and is able to intrude into the life of a person, to cause a flood, to drown a man in a river or a lake and to make *Arzhan Suu*, sacred springs with healing water. The indigenous people address this spirit like this⁵²:

*You are the master of flowing rivers!
Your army is on birchbark boats,
You are the master of the blue sea!
The stormy blue sea,
Let the gray horse be the sacrifice to you!
We are treating you with araka that hasn't cooled down yet!
Do not lower us into the water, do not throw us into the sea,
Like the Katun, you are smiling!*

Along with the main Spirit of Water, the Altai respected owners of any reservoir. A.M. Sagalaev mentions that the most developed ideas about spirits of water were in northern Altai. One legend from this part of Altai tells of a young man who shot at a girl sitting on a piece of ice during an ice drift, while she was combing her red hair. The angry girl promised to drown the imprudent young man. Some time after that, he got drowned while crossing a river⁵³.

Apart from *Suu Eezi*, according to the Altai beliefs, there are some malicious spirits in water, too. We come across the ideas that evil water spirits cannot move against the current. As soon as they have only one way to go down the river and eventually get into oceans, people referred the headwaters to live by⁵⁴.

A.A. Sagalaev describes the Altai rites of worshiping water. As an example, there is a rather rare custom to leave bones of shot animals in a

source of water. People also remember old days, when a young bull could be used as a sacrifice to the Spirit of Water – the slaughtered animal was put on a small raft and people let it go down the river. To save a child from disease, people also could make a doll and sent it down on a raft down the river. At the beginning of 20th century Burkhanists used to shoot from guns into the river from its source towards the estuary in order to prevent diseases (infections, epidemics) from spreading. For example, when in 1909 Taitak, a *yarlykchi* among the Burkhanists, died from typhus, the Burkhanists who came to his grave performed the same ritual⁵⁵.

In ancient times, there were strict rules for visiting and using water-bodies. Dark and deep lakes in gloomy places in mountains have numerous beliefs about them. Until now, old people fear mountainous lakes, they are afraid of them and advise against visiting such lakes. Young Altai respondents also say that they don't wish to wash with water in a lake, let alone to swim in lakes. Some people say that they hear different sounds on shores of such water bodies. Local population believes that individual lakes are interconnected by underground drains. Some stories support this belief, for there are stories when an animal drowned in one lake, and was found later in another one, whose location was lower compared to the lake where it drowned. The local residents also have a prejudice about springs that flow from under roots of strongly gnarled and twisted trees, or from under trees whose trunks wind around one another. We know some stories that are typical of Central Asia that tell to avoid visiting springs that flow from under three birches, because people believe there is an invisible web that blocks the way for travelers.

The Altai social community traditionally divides all sources into Kara-Suu, Tongmok-Suu, Arzhan Suu and Em-Kutuk-Suu (Kutuk-Suu). The class of Kara-Suu sources is represented in Altai in abundance, they are sources with clean drinking water, people use this water for washing, to treat some diseases and for household needs. Tongmok-Suu sources are also widely spread, their water is the same as in Kara-Suu springs, but icy cold.

Kutuk-Suu is a living source, it is hidden and can show itself not to every person. It is recognized by white water, which resembles milk in

color. If you wash your hands in it, or stir up the water, then Kutuk-Suu will disappear and there is a chance to see it only in a year. Therefore, when a person comes across such “milky” water source, he must heartily thank the spirit of this source, address words to it with requests for health, long life, and only then he can drink a little of water. The Altai belief says that without a ceremony of gratitude ritual the person, who drinks the water from Kutuk-Suu can live a long life, but will suffer on his deathbed.

Arzhan-Suu springs are sacred healing springs, often the water in them doesn't freeze even in winter, and the indigenous people use it to treat themselves. These Arzhan-Suu springs may come up to the surface differently. Some of them are small waterfalls and flow down in secluded places, some squirt from the crater in a hanging cliff, others look like ponds or polished bowls in rocks. According to a legend, when people killed a horse of a *baatyr* (a strong warrior), instead of blood there was water flowing from its wounds, and this water could sooth and heal wounds⁵⁶. The Altai people think that this was the way how the healing Arzhan-Suu springs appeared.

It is known that the Altai people worship Owner's Spirit of each water source. They believe that it is Spirit of Water (*Suu-Eezi*) that has the healing power, and not the water of the spring itself. People say that each Arzhan-Suu has its own master-spirit that has an image of a young slender girl in Altai light clothes of mild colors. The science has shown that the healing springs of Altai have mineral water, and contain different chemical elements, such as silver, gold, iron, hydrogen sulphide, and Arzhan-Suu sources with warm water have radon. The indigenous people distinguished different properties of water in Arzhan-Suu: they can especially be used to treat eyes, stomach, heart, etc. People say that in some medical cases water from Arzhan-Suu was the only remedy. In the Altai society there is a belief that stones on the bottom resemble organs of the body that the water is supposed to heal.

The local community has rules of how to visit the sacred places with Arzhan-Suu that are preserved from ancient times. A trip to get water from the source is to be done at defined terms and with observation of

special rituals. The custom is to visit the healing springs twice a year. The first time is in summer, when leaves appear from buds, and the Altai people usually say: the nature "turns green". The second time to come to the spring is in early autumn, when nature "turns yellow" and when the moon is new. The right time to arrive at the spring is from mid day to 2 p.m. People prepare for the visit in advance: women bake *teertpek* (Altai 'flat round bread'), grind fresh *talkan* (Altai 'ground grains of roasted barley'), prepare green tea, fresh cream, boiled milk and *kurut* (Altai 'meal prepared from curds of milk that is dried in the sun or smoked in ail')⁵⁷.

At Arzhan-Suu people should be "clean", i.e., they shouldn't have relatives who died during the year. Children under 15 years never come to visit Arzhan-Suu. On the way to the source, the visitors were silent and did not hunt. As a rule, they stopped at some distance from the spring, took saddles from their horses and let them rest. Then there was a fire made nearby, one person was sent to get water in a kettle. Filling of the kettle was preceded with a ceremony, when new white *kyira*-ribbons were tied to the branches of the tree that was growing near the Arzhan-Suu spring. When tying the ribbons, the people asked for well-being for their family and the whole clan members. It is said that the *kyira* should only be of the white color⁵⁸. Sometimes there was a traveler, who didn't have a new white ribbon, then he could tie an even number of plants to the tree. The development of Burkhanism has changed the color-based symbolism of the *kyira*-ribbons. Along with the ribbons of white color, blue and yellow ones could also be used. Moreover, the *yarlykchy* asserted that it was possible to tie ribbons of five colors onto a birch-tree, but the main colors would still be white, yellow and blue⁵⁹.

Having tied the ribbons, a person was allowed to take three swallows of water from the Arzhan-Suu. Then the cups were filled with milk, and with wooden spoons people sprinkled the milk three times in direction of the spring and the fire, and three times they bowed to the spring. Tea and meat (some reports say that no meat was cooked) were prepared without salt. The fire was made from firewood brought from home. The obligatory rite of treating the fire and smoking with juniper (Altai *archyn*) was

performed. After cooking, the ritual of treating the Spirit of Water with milk, *talkan* and *teertpeks* followed. Only after the whole rite was performed, it was allowed to use the water for washing and drinking. People took the healing water of Arzhan-Suu home.

Judging by different reports, it is known that the Altai community believed that a person for his misconduct could be punished by the Spirit of Water. The punishment could be death, an illness, road accident, natural disasters like hail and storm. People knew that it was forbidden to take water from Kara-Suu and Arzhan-Suu after the sunset and before dawn, otherwise *Suu-Eezi* could take away the soul of the person, who has violated these rules. That is why people try to be very quiet when they are near Arzhan-Suu, they don't wash dirty hands in its water, even flowers and other plants and branches of trees are not picked at the place where Arzhan-Suu spring is running. People don't step over "the head" of the spring. We can also say that in pre-Soviet times, farm animals were kept away from springs. All this shows that at places of Arzhan-Suu and other water sources it was always clean.

Today we notice that the environmental awareness indigenous population of Altai is changing. Young people forget the ecological traditions of the older generation. There are farms, camps for tourists and business organizations very close to small and large rivers. We witness dumping of garbage into water bodies. But such Arzhan-Suu sources as Chulyshman, Dzhumalinskiye Klyuchi, Cheremsha, Kyzyl-Ozyok, Solotoy Klyuchik, Rakhmanovsky Istochnik have preserved their sacred significance.

We have highlighted that important component of the consciousness and behavior of the indigenous population is the sacralization of water, as integral part of Altai. All rivers, lakes and springs of Altai are sacred. They are worshipped, there are prayers for them that people perform, and ceremonies are held with observation of rules that are many centuries old. The sacred waters are symbols of the thousand-year-old Altai, its history and culture. They occupy large place in the worldview of the indigenous population of the Altai.

Grigory I. Choros-Gurkin had a perfect understanding of the soul of

his people and addressed the Katun river, the Altai's symbol, with the following glorious anthem-like words: "As if enchanted, you are standing under the wing of the magical nature and in delight you want to shout to someone... Whether to people who live in far away, dusty, stuffy cities or to slaves of everyday noise, petty worries, lost in the hustle of everyday life, or maybe to someone else: Leave everything and use the wings of your mind to bring yourself to this valley. Take a look at the virgin purity of Altai, at its magic Katun-the-Beauty, at this symbol of eternal life, tireless striving forward... In its waves you will feel that life is pulsing and that the spirit of Universe is awake in it from the moment of creation of the world. ... Here it is, foaming, passionate, sparkling with emerald streams, splashing and playing with rainbow colors. It is full of magical energy, all of it is movement and life. The fragrant pines are crowded close to its shores and are stretching out their curly branches to it. And from above there are cliffs and mountains that are looking at its crystal waters. It is the happiness and decoration of Altai. A nomad worships it, composes songs and ties a ribbon to honor it. And the boiling Katun, as if feeling all this, is noisily rushing forward with victorious glory. On its way, it is sending "forgive me" to the mountains of its shores and to the entire Altai. We hear its languid sighs: they are flying to the depth of the blue smoky mounts and ceasing in the heart of the giant".⁶⁰

The lofty attitude to nature and worshipping it like this, is the tribute and gratitude to the great and small rivers of Altai that feed the people who live here and are part of their homeland.

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ELEMENT OF FIRE IN THE TRADITIONAL CULTURE OF ALTAIANS

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ABSTRACT

The given work is devoted to the problem of preserving and understanding traditional culture's meaningfulness for the value system of modern man. The key symbols-patterns of the Altai traditional mythology, personified patterns of fire and water are presented in the article. These are shown in a female appearance. The peculiarities and the main aspects of the mythological presentations about the ties of the earthy universe and heavenly universe and contiguity of these two worlds in every day life of a man are shown. The role of fire and water is considered as mediators between the world of people and the world of spirits. The central theme of the Altaians' traditional notions, that is worship of the natural universum, the maternal origin and the life as absolute sacral value is designated.

Keywords: tradition, symbolic image, Altaians, cult of fire, cult of water, hearth, symbolic bans, sacral, secular.

In old centuries the notion "culture" embodied the unicity of the national world, which was formed on the base of ancient layers of the ethnic world. But today, culture is becoming global and it reflects value systems, washing out national and ethnic cultural borders. Under these conditions, the problem of preservation of identity and unicity of national ethnic cultures and the resultant traditional symbolic complex is growing. Preservation and reproduction of the culture's unicity in any type of society is connected with tradition.

A tradition (from latin *traditio* – transmission, legend) as a scientific category, considered by a number of social-humanitarian sciences, has been researched thoroughly taking into account different historical-cultural

contexts and realities from the cultural-philosophical, socio-psychological, ethnological, ethnographic and other positions. It can be proved by a considerable mass of investigations of native and foreign scientists, among them being the works of thinkers known all over the world – M. Khaidegger, H.G. Gadamer, E. Giddens, M. Veber, E.C. Markaryan, Y.M. Lotman. However, till now the investigation of “a tradition” hasn’t been completed. It is necessary to turn our attention to the problem of tradition as an integral element of vital activity and stability of any human society due to the global transformations of contemporary culture.

We consider “tradition” in this article in connection with such notions as: “traditional society”, “traditional culture”. In this context, a tradition is defined as social-cultural experience of ethnos’ adaptation to the conditions of existence, which is passed and inherited in spatial-temporal continuum, and a tradition is the mechanism of transmission of ethnic cultural memory, encoded in a sign-symbolic form (myth, ceremony, ritual, folklore). We consider a tradition from the position of traditional consciousness for which it is an absolute value.

A German philosopher, one of the great thinkers of the second half of the 20th century H.G. Gadamer considered tradition as a phenomenon, which “...consecrated by a legend and a custom, has a nameless authority and all our historical final reality is determined by constant supremacy inherited from our forefathers but not only understood on reasonable bases... This is the base of any education”¹. Further on, he pays attention to the fact that a man as a result of social-cultural evolution, evaluating himself as an independent and freely thinking personality in his establishments and actions, as independent of past “prejudices”, at the same time “becoming his own master”, is not released “from the power of customs and legend”². The philosopher doesn’t consider this power of tradition as a state, which it is necessary to overcome on the way of progress, but as a state of soul and mind of each human as a primary “blending with a legend”³, forming a spiritual base of the generations’ life. According to Gadamer, interpretation of a tradition, acknowledgement, understanding, is also a moment of a tradition: “The tradition, to which we belong and in which we live... “doesn’t consist of

only monuments and texts..." this is "cognizable in the communicative experience world. It is passed to us as constantly open to infinity task"⁴.

The notion of a tradition unites in its structure two meaningful opposites: sacral and profane, sacred and secular. A famous philosopher who knows English and French languages, a historian and a culturologist Mircha Eliade writes that "...*sacred* and *secular* – are two images of reality in the world, two situations of existence, accepted by a man in the course of history"⁵. A tradition in this sense is a unique way of existence and preservation of the generations' experience: displays itself in an ordinary world of existence of daily reality, empirical experience of a human (secular) and simultaneously embodies by itself the connection of a man with unrealized sacral world (sacred).

One of the main archaic images of natural space and objects of the daily world of Altaians is Fire – a living source of their daily life (cooking food, warmth of the hearth). The reverence of fire as a life-giving and sacral force is characteristic for all Turks. The researchers Zh.V. Poskonnaya and A.I. Naeva single out the cult of fire as central structure in the ritual system of Altaians, enveloping all events in the family and kin life, from daily to the signal and sacral ⁶.

The Altaians connect the cult of Fire with the notion of a family hearth, with the image of a woman-mother as the keeper of the hearth – *Ut-ana, Ot-ene* (fire-mother). She was honoured as the mother of all people, embodying in her image the spirit of the Fire. Great *Ot-ene* connects in her image triune symbols, the image of Mother, the image of Fire and the image of Sun. Naturally it goes back to the sources of many archaic solar cults, only with such difference, that the female image, connected with the symbol of fire is not so widely spread in traditional cultures, but the Altai traditional ceremonial rites in this respect are close to matriarchal tradition. A German philosopher, sociologist, the leader of Frankfurt sociological school E. Fromm in his work *A Healthy Society*, thinking upon the deep sources of basic needs of a contemporary man in psychological defence, love, kindness and forgiveness writes about the ancient history of mankind, perceiving these deep values as matriarchal. He writes, that matriarchy preceded patriarchy "... it is such a stage of

the development of humanity, where the ties, binding a human with his mother, his kin and land, were the super form of joining the world both individually and socially... the mother was a central figure in the family, in the life of the society and in the religion"⁷. Thinking upon cruelty, competition and rivalry as the dominating psychological features of the contemporary human urban culture, Frommin supposes that a man subconsciously tries to find harmony and truth lost by him in the process of evolution, guessing about "... that all people are the children of Mother-Earth... having essential right for love and happiness"⁸. That's what appeals to ancient sources of human experience – traditional culture, where the image of mother was sacral, giving life and heating like a fire.

The great *Ot-Ene*, symbolizing the spirit of Fire, not only connected with the fireplace, family, but also with procreation and that is with life and protection of the kin. The woman like the guardian of the hearth, even in her every day activities is closer to sacral. As F.A. Satlayev writes: "Each hostess, when she cooks, obligatory feeds the spirit of the fire"⁹. The burning hearth in dwelling is the embodiment of protection and entity of the family, its guardian, that's why turned over cauldron or destroyed *tagan*¹⁰ (iron pot stand) are the symbols of chaos, destruction, death. In Altaic folklore we find many superstitions, prohibitions in handling of fire, which are connected with the fear to lose sympathy and protection of the spirit of the fire. A.I. Naeva holds up as an example the most widespread mythological narration, the story of the informer about the conversation of two spirits of Fire: "Years ago one clairvoyant stayed overnight in *ail* of one person. When he almost fell asleep, beautiful woman came into *ail*, another woman got up from the hearth to meet her. So, two women began speaking. The woman who went out from the fire looked bad. Then another woman began taking interest, why did that woman look this way. And she answered: "How I can look good, if their children take a knife and stir me". Another one began telling about good attitude towards her, how people treat her each time, sprinkled with milk. The clairvoyant had heard all that and told people about it." This story shows that Altaian attitude towards fire is like sacral event: if someone doesn't honour the spirit of fire, doesn't offer blessed wishes to him and doesn't

provide tidiness and care for the hearth, doesn't treat it with milk, the spirit of fire can leave the person's dwelling and his family¹¹.

There are many rituals, connected with fire. There is a rule, by which the fire can be taken out of dwelling: when it is needed to share it with tribesman or when the fire is needed for sacrifice. But it is prohibited to do so after dusk. Getting a light from the hearth, it is prohibited to go out from dwelling, it needs to smoke the pipe to the end, sitting by this hearth, and it needs to tap the ashes out of a pipe by the log, burning in the hearth. The fire is essential part of the wedding rite. For the newly wedded couple, the fire is taken from father's hearth. When the son marries, while leaving he takes the burning firebrand from the father's hearth, girl has to say goodbye to her tribal fire and become familiar with the fire of husband's kin. The fire has cleaning power, it doesn't admit the evil spirits into the dwelling, scares away the souls of the deceased, gives breed to livestock, cures the illnesses. In beliefs and rites there are many rules about handling of fire, it is prohibited to step over the hearth, step on the ash, pour out litter and mud, back out of every day feeding and treating of the fire by pieces of food, touch by knife edge, because it is possible to wound the head of Fire-Mother. For the violation of prescribed rules, God of fire punishes people by illnesses, unguards them from evil spirits, burns some or other things, and sometimes the dwelling.

As N.P. Dyrenkova notices, fire was not only tribal God, but each family has its own family fire as well and mixing it with the fire of another family, borrowing the coal with fire was supposed to be a sin. Even it wasn't allowed to cook in a dish, being earlier on other people's fire¹². From the big list of actions / prohibitions in relation to fire in all spoken stories, the following motives are repeated and sung over again: "It is prohibited to mix the fire with a knife; pointing by sharp object is not allowed to touch the fire – spirit of the fire will be angry; it is prohibited to consecrate the fire by alcohol (it is not allowed to do it by red wine, it is allowed to do it by milk wine, because it's equal to milk); it is allowed to be treated by tea without salt; milk, dried cheese, *talkan* (fried and strained through mealing stone barley); in each new moon the fire is treated by *talkan*, milk, juniper, usually every time when the meal is cooked, human

at first may not eat by himself, but treats the spirit of the fire by spoon, it is prohibited for stranger to consecrate the fire in other people's house, manage someone else's fire; each person must consecrate his own fire"¹³. For the violation of above-mentioned standards of behavior, the God of fire punishes family members by different illnesses, unguarded of evil spirits, sometimes even burns some or other things, and sometimes dwelling. The burnt-out thing was considered to be the most awful signal of the angriness of the God of fire, after that the special prayer with sacrifice was held. As N.P. Dyrenkova notices, when it happened during the hunting, hunters left the place of hunting¹⁴.

What does the God of fire look like in the image of Altai people? Earlier, it was the image of white, fair-haired girl – *Kys-Ene* (Maiden-Woman). Taking into consideration the ancient history of this mythological character, it may be supposed that this image is connected with Caucasian anthropological type of Altaians' ancestors of bronze and Scythian times' epoch. Sometimes God or spirit of fire is presented to wear white clothes and is called *ak-jalar* (white flame). Not without interest is presented transformation of the Fire image in later legends. So, the appearance of Russians in Altai became the basis for beginning of new image of spirit of Fire, presented as "Russian girl with blond hair"¹⁵.

The attitude of Altai people towards fire is very careful and reverential till now. Due to this, their customs have been preserved until the present. The Altaians' ancestors, ancient Turks, presented the fire like all-powerful God, who generates by himself, breathes, and constantly changes. The presentation about birth, growth, development and life on the whole was associated with a fire among Turks. As famous Khakass ethnographer N.F. Katanov wrote: "By Tatars' notions the spirit of the fire grows, warms an animate creature, it died as soon as the spirit of the fire left this creature, that is taps into the Earth, and the soul joins hordes of spirits on the Earth. The ancient Turks presented the God of fire in their mythologies in the images of red cow, red bull, red rooster. By other presentations, the fire was personified with the image of woman. *Ut-ana*, fire-mother, *ot-ene* (*Ut ene*) was considered to be the mother of all people. When the fire whistled in hearth, they bowed to flame and said: "The fire – you are our mother,

having thirty teeth, you are our mother of the wife, having forty teeth”¹⁶.

Ancient Turks considered that the skills of being in possession of fire and the profession of blacksmith they got from supreme God – Khan Tengri. Therefore, they were not allowed to get married with a girl of another kin, in order not to leak a word about a mystery of blacksmith’s mastership. Blacksmiths who dealt with celestial fire passed secrets of iron melting from father to son. They were not allowed to marry others – who weren’t blacksmiths or tribes and clans of blacksmiths.

In Altai myths and mythological stories, the image of fire acts in woman’s hypostasis as Mother-fire, who rides a white-yellow horse. Here the clear connection of fire and sun is observed, the image of fire associatively joins the Sun, which rides on a horse which traditionally symbolizes time. Fire is considered to be the part of sun, the heaven fire in yurt. Special emphasis was laid on hearth, which was placed in the centre of *yurt*, like the sacral place in dwelling space. The sun and fire, their connection with presentations about life, about development and offspring referred to woman as ancestress, guardian of the offspring.

The plots of Altaic mythological legends about the origin of fire have something in common with Mongolian ritual-mythological plots, in which “earlier presentations about fire’s heavenly origin are synthesized (evidently, due to lightning strike, which is sometimes interpreted as conception in cosmic marriage) and later presentations about fire’s artificial getting (flint, which in Mongolian languages is expressed by the same word as flash of lightning). Creation of the fire is connected with the first-creation epoch: when mountain (Altai, Khangay, Burkhan-haldun, Sumeru) was a hill...”¹⁷.

In traditional Altaians’ ritualism well-wishes take up special place, which are devoted to hearth and fire. The hearth – *ochok* is a sacral place in a dwelling, because the spirit of fire lives in it. Sprinkling of fire is made only after telling blessed wishes by the hostess. A.I. Naeva cites the text’s fragment, which was written from the words of informer¹⁸:

*Let your ash, like talkan,
Won’t be thrown about
Let your stone hearth be stable.*

*Let your tagan with three stays
Won't been parted with hot cauldron!*

Fire element at the same time belongs to two words: sacral and profane. In blessed wishes – *alkyshs* – celestial image of the spirit of Fire occurs like connection with the above world: “Mother-fire, having umbilical cord in the sky”, “Mother-fire, having four cords”, therefore a place of the hearth in a dwelling – is the bed of the fire, sacral area¹⁹. As M. Eliade writes: “For estimation of the abyss’s depth, dividing two experiences – sacred and profane, it is possible by the way of reading the works about sacred space and ritual organizing of human’s dwelling... about consecration of human’s life itself and about sacred character of the main life functions”²⁰ of the person, which obeyed to certain supreme order.

According to A.M. Sagalaev, fire symbolizes the space, which is mastered by human, spiritual centre, surrounded by numerous relations and relationships of the profane world with the sacral world via human, the fire presented a kind of magic intersection point of humans’ fates and lives. So, for example, in marriage ritual folklore of Altaians, the image of hearth is a symbol of loving embodiment, sacredness of their union. Fire and hearth in marriage well-wishes are a kind of interlink and the centre of the house²¹:

*On the plain place put your yurt.
Let your spousal becomes firmly established.
Let your dwelling be in good order,
A stone hearth will be firm,
The fire in it will be eternal
Let your ash as talkan, not disperse,
The stone hearth-tripod will not be pulled down
From your tripod tagan
A hot copper won't be taken off...*

In the ritual folklore of the Altaians the verbal material, in the first place is presented by *alkyshams* (blessed wishes) which play a leading role in all ritual actions. Anthropomorphism of the fire’s image is reflected in the texts of blessed wishes, devoted to it: Fire has a father, who strikes sparks,

a mother with thirty heads and ears curved cane, of bent reed, with decorations on her head: "My father, stricken a great flame, my mother, raking up a stony ochok, sparks sparkling"²².

There are highly artistic poetic images of Fire in blessed wishes:

*Thirty-headed mother-fire,
As a branchy flower maiden-mother,
With a bed out of gathered ash
Mother-fire, having a navel-string in the sky.
With a belt from an iron tagan,
With a face of rhododendron colour,
With sparkling eyes,
Dark faced, mother -fire,
With disappearing-appearing face*²³.

In mythological tales it is said that a fire, a hearth as an anthropomorphic creature may itself by way of knocking inform his masters about future misfortune. The masters of a house always listened attentively to the burning of firewood in the fire. If they heard a whistle, it meant that a fire-spirit had a good mood, and the master would hear good news and accept the guests²⁴.

Besides colourful blessed wishes to the fire, there are many aetiological myths about its origin in the Altaians' folklore: "When Kudai had made a human, he said: A human will be naked, how can he live in the cold? It's necessary to create the fire! But three Ulgen's daughters are laughing at him and Kudai having got angry, leaves: Three Ulgen's daughters are laughing at me and making fun of me though they can't find the sharpness of a stone and firmness of iron themselves. Having heard this, three Ulgen's daughters took the sharpness of a stone and firmness of iron and struck the fire"²⁵. A veiled metaphor about striking the fire from the sharpness of a stone and firmness of iron is a variant of the real method of extraction of fire which was told by Kudai's God himself – an open-hearted sage.

Special attitude to the fire as sacral, honoured image was reflected in small genres of Altaic folklore. Almost all attributes of fire are shown in the riddles. From the semiotic point of view, ashes in the hearth show

income and wealth of the family, that's why in the riddles the ashes are encoded just in the image of a fat sheep: "My one-sided sheep is lying and getting fat". "The fat white sheep is lying in the cattle shed". It is remarkable that in the riddles not only semantic importance of the elements of fire is reflected, but its characterological data are also marked, as for example in the following riddle about burning fire-brand: "If you catch a head – you are wild, If you catch a tail – you are quiet". A hearth as a symbol of the house's prosperity naturally requires encoding of the hearth elements necessary for the prosperity of the family with the signs. In this case the more often used image of a sheep is symbolic: "The master of the yurt has roamed, And only a black ram stays at that place (burnt down fire-brand); "My yurt has been roamed, a black headed sheep stays at that place" (fire brand); "An old woman is sleeping near the bonfire" (burnt round log).

The main image of the implied object is changing depending on the theme concerning the fire attributes. If a fire brand is more often associated with the symbol of wealth, then a fire and a flame are encoded more poetically in the image of a fast horse or maral: "My red horse bites, My black horse kicks" (Fire and burning fire brand); "Running after each other, Two marals are butting" (flame).

The character in the riddles about the steel and flint is not a representative of the animal world, but a young guy: "When Burum-Burum struck, a grey rock sparkled" (steel and flint); "A handsome lad is sitting at the river-crossing" (steel on the belt); "One cap for three" (*tagan*); "Three brothers have one belt" (*tagan's circle*)²⁶. A riddle as one of the widely spread genre of a small folklore form is one more proof of special attention paid to all elements of fire and hearth, poetic, elevated attitude not only to the object of honour, but to its attributes too.

In the Altaic ritual folklore there are many forms of blessed wishes, devoted to the hearth, the copper on fire with corresponding mythological tales. According to the Altaians, *ochok* (hearth) is an abode of the spirit of fire and because of this he gets the status of sacral honoured object. That's why in blessed wishes, the hearth's mistress often has the image of a

woman, belted by an iron hoop, symbolically correlating with the *tagan* on the tripod:

*Let your ashes, just as talkan,
Not be dispersed,
Let your stone hearth be steady
Let your tagan with three props
Not part with a hot cauldron!*²⁷

In mythological tales a hearth is considered as a bed of fire, having a head of bed, its sides and a bed-foot. According to the tradition, head of the hearth should be decorated with tied sanctified ribbons; interior mutton fat and a twig of juniper should be put on the constructed small “altar”. Ashes were honoured as a bed of fire, that’s why it can’t be carried out in the evening, because the prosperity of house may be gone together with it. It mustn’t be poured out there where people go, therefore a special place is chosen for ashes.

The hearth, Fire in the culture of Altaians is an extraordinary capacious mythopoetic symbol. Being a constant centre of dwelling, it defined the status of assimilated space, and was that organizing start, round which the cultural space of ethnos was formed.

So, from the point of view of a contemporary person, in a tradition different worlds are connected whimsically: earthly and heavenly, sacral and profane. As the French philosopher Pascal Bryukner thinks, religious “aspiration upwards gave way to trivial common place of the New time, the great absolute truth – to very many small relative ones”, that deprived a contemporary man of “all chains” and obligations stipulated by transcendental and nothing protects him from “mean mode of life ...which was so ennobled by trust, prayer and ritual”²⁸. The breaking off with a tradition, evaluating it as forever overcome state (prejudice), couldn’t influence the contradictions and problems of human reality in the contemporary world. That’s why with such nostalgia for the former tenor of life for basic traditions and values sound the words of contemporary inhabitants of Altai about the necessity of their restoring to life and consolidation in the youth’s consciousness.

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ICONOGRAPHIC PECULIARITIES OF THE CULT OF GREAT MOTHER IN ALTAI

I.A. ZHERNOSENKO

ABSTRACT

The article is devoted to the culturological and semiotic analysis of the iconography of the most revered deities of Turkic peoples– Goddess Umai. The author examines extensive material found in the adjacent territories of Siberia and Central Asia, which are identified in the clusters of archaeological objects of Altai and are defined by the researchers as sacred centers of ancient times and the middle ages. On the basis of a large factual material, that was used in the study, a semiotic analysis of iconography of the personages of Turkic and Paleo Siberian mythological sphere was conducted. It has allowed the author to identify their semantic unity and to identify the main types of the canonical image of the Great Goddess (the Mother Goddess), as the Turks called Umai.

In this study, the author found the typology of the iconography of Goddess Umai (Mother Goddess), formed in the territory of Altai from Paleolithic times. At different stages of the Eurasian cultural genesis of the iconography of the Mother Goddess, there were accented different iconographic features of this universal spiritual concept of Eurasian nations: the archaic Mother Deer (Maralukha); Great Goddess of the Bronze Age, that was depicted with a halo around her head, what transformed a 'shining' headdress to the kokoshnik; and medieval Umai in the tricorn tiara. Since the sacred centers of Altai are the kind of palimpsests (multi-layered texts), this factor allowed carrying out cross-cultural research in diachronic and synchronic aspects.

Keywords: the Great Goddess, Mother Goddess, Umai, Rozhanitsa, Orans, Uly Ana, sacred centers of Altai, a semantic code, ornamental elements, a tricorn tiara, a shamanic image, a folk costume.

Iconography of the Goddess Umai – the Great Goddess (Mother Goddess)
– and its place in the mythological picture of the ancient Turks has been

considered by many researchers. However, until now they haven't got a united opinion concerning her portrayal by the ancient Turks¹. Probably, it is necessary to refer to a number of iconographic canons, related to the cult of Umai in the context of the universal concept of Great Mother which may be met in Altai in different historical periods. In early publications² we substantiated the thesis that the sacral centres of Altai are a kind of palimpsests – “many layered texts” which allow to realize complex cross-cultural researches, revealing the dynamics of historico-cultural processes both in synchronistic and diachronic aspects. To prove the veracity of the conclusions of the semiotic analysis, we'll be guided by analogical artefacts which may also be met beyond the borders of the Altai region.

On the rocky altars of Altai side by side with dominating pictures of mountain goats, deers and female maral, inconspicuous portrayal of anthropomorphous figure pulled apart in the form of a yoke hands and widely stood apart legs, are often seen (Fig. 1).



FIG. 1: *THE WOMAN IN LABOR. PETROGLYPH, ELANGASH TRACT.*
(PHOTO BY THE AUTHOR)

These figures in the pose of “a woman in child-birth” are often depicted near a beast or in the scenes of copulation. The researchers argue: whether it is a hunter (especially if he has a bow with arrow), or a shaman,

or a woman in child-birth. The most convinced marker of such portrayal is archetype of a fertile woman (a woman in childbirth) with a child, which is met on the rocks of Elangash, Karagem, village Ozyornoye, Karban, Kalbak-Tash and others. It specifies the iconography of above-mentioned personage. The variation of the given image is the portrayal of a woman in child-birth with raised hands – in the “pose of *Oranta*” (praying).

Sometimes these pictures make up a complicated many figured composition (a kind of “many-storeyed woman in child-birth”) (Fig. 2), symbolizing continuity of generations, when daughter becomes mother, and everything is repeated. Below we’ll consider archaic Siberian cult of heavenly mistress-moose cows: mother and daughter who played the key role in the formation of the cult and iconography of Umai.

On the rock altar Irbistu we found an unusual mirrored image of women in child-birth (Fig.2.2.). According to E.A. Novgorodova, this kind of iconography contains in itself the sense of reversibility of the world revealed and another one: “... analogies from different territories prove that most probably these are two women as if they give birth to each other, i.e., each of them may be regarded the mother of another. Thus, here we must see the same expression of continuity of human race, as on the three staged petroglyphs”³.

However, the most ancient portrayals of Great Mother in Altai territory are considered the portrayals of Female Maral (Maralukha), according to the most ancient Eurasian mythologema, which regarded a doe, moose cow, female maral as foremother of all real. The reflection of this mythologema of ancient Aryans, Proto-Slavs, Paleo-Siberian people was seen in the sky in the constellations of the Great Bear and the Little Bear: they identified them with moose cow and a calf, later they were forced out by the cult of bear. B.A. Rybakov considered in detail, the cult of a Doe (Moose Cow) as an incarnation of the mythologema of the Great Goddess of Slavs, Finn-Ugor and Siberian people in his fundamental monograph *Heathenism of ancient Slavs*⁴.

Moreover, the most typical chronological marker is the presence of heaven mistresses (mother and daughter) in the Siberian people’s



FIG. 2.1. "MULTI-STOREY WOMAN IN LABOR"

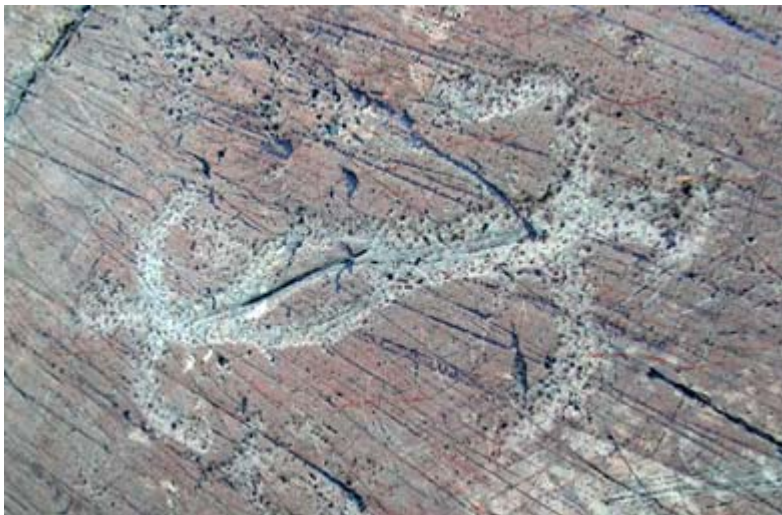


FIG. 2.2. "DOUBLE WOMAN IN LABOR", PETROGLYPH, IRBISTU TRACT.
(PHOTO BY THE AUTHOR)

mythology. They are half-women, half-moose cows (or *vazhenkas* – she-reindeer). These Goddesses more often had horns: it is known, that she-deer of the only species from the deer family have horns, that is reindeer. Mass reindeer hunting on the territory of Eurasia began long ago in Paleolith, and the culmination was reached in Mesolithic. A reindeer was found in Altai in early 20th century along the border of Russia with Mongolia and Tuva. This data confirms the substantiated words of B.A.

Rybakov: "The cult of heavenly deer presents *general* archaic stage of religious ideas, but for the tribes who turned to agriculture long ago, this stage was severely effaced, but for recent hunters this idea remained in great completeness"⁵.

The portrayals of a horned deer on the petroglyphs of Altai may be considered in two ways: either it is a picture of a male maral, more often on the sunny rocky altars as a realization of mythologema of the solar cult "Golden Horned Deer" and the reflection of the myth about Heavenly Hunter; or it is a portrayal of archaic Goddess Mother as a horned Doe. In that case on such rocky panels, it is necessary to look for additional markers, allowing to attribute these pictures as the realization of the Great Goddess cult.

The visions of Goddess Mother in the image of Female Maral or a horned Doe may be met in Altai territory practically everywhere. The most well-known petroglyph's monuments are the grotto Kuilyu, Kuyus, Bichiktu-Boom, Kalbak-Tash, Elangash, Irbis-Tuu. The markers of such portrayals are: the vision of a maral-cub and a bird under the belly of female maral (the grotto Kuilyu); the picture of female maral and maral-cub running near each other (Kuyus, Elangash, Kalbak-Tash); she-deer with its cub (Kalbak-Tash); the hunter, shooting at female maral (Elangash); "getting of an embryo" into the body of female maral. "The embryo" of the third example has a specific image, resembling *Kalbaktash* "shaman-women".

"The pose of Oranta" of *Kalbaktash* "shaman-women", is known as an iconographic sign of Goddess Mother. Synchronous pictures on the plates of stony sarcophagi of Karakol and Ozyornoye (Mountain Altai) were discovered by B.D. Kubarev as well as numerous analogous pictures on the rocky altars of Altai, Mongolia, Tuva and Khakassia. They are interpreted by researchers as the images of shaman-women⁶. In our opinion, fractal likeness of iconography of "shaman-women" and "embryo" of female maral on different panels of sacral centre Kalbak-Tash, and also the portrayal of "shaman-women" and she-deer on one panel prove their semantic unity and belonging to the cult of Goddess Mother.

The portrayals of the “shaman-women” in the pose of “oranta”, that is praying with highly raised hands is surely a later phenomenon. It is developed from the ancient image of a fertile (giving birth) woman which may be met practically all over Eurasia since the Eneolithic Period in the form of petroglyphs. This symbol was so important and fundamental since ancient times, that it left an unforgettable trail in all the following layers of the Eurasian culture genesis: on the vessels of the Bronze Age, on the Slav embroideries, depicting women in birth on the towels and hems of female clothes, on the edgings of bed-spreads and so on. (This question was considered in detail by B.A. Rybakov in his monograph *Heathenism of ancient Slavs* and also by A. Golan in his systemic research *Myth and symbol*). In middle ages in orthodox tradition this plot became the base of iconography of the Virginal icons, such as “Oranta”, “Sign”, “Protection of the Holy Virgin”, “Inexhaustible Cup” and so on, symbolizing intercession of Great Mother.



FIG. 3.1. ORNAMENTAL ELEMENT “KOSHKAR MUYIZ”



FIG. 3.2. ORNAMENTAL ELEMENT “ULY ANA”

The logic of transformation of iconographic symbol of Great mother among Turkic nations in Islamic tradition is significant: in the key ornamental elements *koshkar muyiz* (sheep horns), *tuye taban* (camel’s footstep), *synar muyiz* (one horn) (Fig. 3.1). The Kazakh researcher Kashgali

uly Alibek, who worked out the methodological bases of the ornamental science and expounded them in his monograph *Organon of the ornament*, substantially proves that these elements appeared not as the result of imitation of nature by a human, but they present a cultural code of nomads, under the conditions prohibited by Islam. Anthropomorphous images of the ancient archetype of Great Mother *Uly Ana* (in Altaic *Ula Ene* – the given ornamental element is also met everywhere in the Altai mode of life. (Fig. 3.2).



FIG. 4. HEADDRESS-HAIRSTYLE OF A MARRIED MONGOLIAN WOMAN

This author retraces the process of contamination of ornamental nucleus of all above-mentioned elements with the mythologema of Ancestral mountain (*Uly Tau*)⁷: “the given element in the Kazakh ornament means first of all a human figure and only in a figurative meaning it may mean sheep horns as the portrayal of the ornamental element *koshkar muyiz* synchronously, as it is shown in the picture, is aimed at designation of the hero who is in the womb of the mother – “mountain-foremother”⁸.

If one looks attentively at the iconography of ornamental element *Uly Ana*, it is practically identical to the countless pictures of Great Mother on the rocky altars of Eurasia (Fig. 1). It is also reflected in a headwear-

hairdo of married Mongolian women (Fig. 4).

On the other hand this tripetalous composition resembles very much Umai's tricorn headwear, the classical image of which is found in a petroglyph on the famous Kudyrgeinsk boulder, found in 1924–1925 in the burial of a baby in the burial ground Kudyrge at the lower reaches of the Chulyshman river (Gorny Altai) (Fig. 5). The dominant feature of the composition, showing the scene of worship is a large figure of a noble woman in clothes with tricorn tiara. By researchers' persuasion (L.R. Kyzlasov, V.D. Kubarev and others) – this is one of the rare images of Altaians' God (and other Turkic nations) – Umai.



FIG. 5. PETROGLYPH ON KUDYRGE BOULDER: SCENE OF WORSHIP OF THE GODDESS UMAI



FIG. 6.1. PETROGLYPH OF THE LAKE BIILIKUL, SOUTH KAZAKHSTAN



FIG. 6.2. *STONE STATUE FROM SEMIRECHYE, SOUTH KAZAKHSTAN*

By analogy with Kudyrginskiy, the number of images in tricorn headwears, the researchers begin to attribute it to iconography of Umai. For example, the images on Sulekskaya's petroglyphs⁹ or visualization discovered near the Biylikul lake in South Kazakhstan¹⁰ and many others. But the character from South Kazakhstan shows exactly Umai is apparently controversial because the custom of wearing one's earring is more suitable for men (Fig. 6.1, 6.2). Apparently, this image possibly refers to priestly images. A.S. Surazakov also pointed to the inadequacy of collected artistic materials of the image of Umai to confirm, that the images in tricorn tiaras definitely refer only to the above-mentioned iconography¹¹.

Along with that, B.A. Rybakov proved demonstratively the origin of tricorn headwear from archaic visions of shaman's travel to the heaven moose cows – the mistresses of the world and the giver of life (the Great Goddess – Mother and Daughter) – by the example of surviving hunting myths of Siberian nations (the Nivkhs, the Nganasans, the Evenkis, the Selkups and others) and their correlation with Perm shaman's metal plates. These artefacts of Trans-Urals region of the epoch of 2nd – 1st century B.C.E. are also called "Chudskiy's metal plates" and referred to so-called "Perm animal style", synchronous Scythian-Siberian animal style, but continuing to exist in hunting nations' culture of the Kama region till 12th century. Next link will be man's disguises with three moose's muzzles above the top of the head¹². On these disguises, moose's muzzles are

strongly stylized and at last transform simply in three triangle projections over head¹³. The author considers this man's disguises like the images of shaman (or priest), reasonably referring his costume with the elements of attributes of God, whom he serves.



FIG. 7: PERMIAN PLAQUES. 2ND – 1ST CENTURIES BC



FIG. 8. ALTAI WOMAN IN CHEGEDEK - NATIONAL COSTUME

Together with above-mentioned, it's worth paying attention to a

number of images, having direct relationship to archaic God Mother. In one of “the Chudskiy’s images”, three-headed Goddess with three bird’s heads (Fig. 7), and solar signs (the circle in the centre of forehead) is seen. This makes the iconographic evolution to tricorn tiara Umai more realistic. In the iconography of her image, the bird features are presented, accenting her heavenly hypostasis. At the same time, let’s pay attention to the “bird” features of married Altai women: *chegedek* – long robe without sleeves with wide sleeve heads and widened above shoulder space – “wings”, wearing above any clothes, and high crowned beaklike fur hat (Fig. 8).

According to B.A. Rybakov, the last stage of iconography of disguises in tricorn tiaras development are the images of “warlike men” on Sasanian dish of 6th–7th centuries. In continuation of this idea, are probably the images of men’s disguises in tricorn tiara from Sulekskaya’s petroglyphs, Biylikul and Semirechensk disguises (Fig. 6.1, 6.2).

L.R. Kyzlasov finds the images of heaven Gods (both male and female) and ministers of religion in tricorn headwears with analogical cult’s attributes, practically in the whole of Eurasia: from Iran to China, from Siberian great spaces to Indian sanctuaries. Analysing numerous visions of Hun-Sarmatian and Turkic stages of Altai history, western Iran of Sasanian period and Tang epoch in China as well as ethnographical shamanic images (*ongons* and *chalu*), L.R. Kyzlasov came to the conclusion that in tricorn head wears *heaven Gods* are imaged. They are more often female and their priests (shamans) quite often imaging next to altar of the sacred fire¹⁴. On Kudyrginskiy boulder there is also the image of *kama* (shaman) in tricorn tiara, worshipping Goddess.

In 1978, G.S. Dluzhnevskaya turned to iconography Umai in her article¹⁵, considered the peculiarities of the Goddess Mother’s iconography among ancient Turks, in particular her tricorn tiara. But the article was harshly criticized by L.P. Potapov¹⁶, refuting the author’s ethnographical data for interpretation of the image on Kudyrginskiy boulder. It’s possible to agree with L.P. Potapov about the research methodology, used by G.S. Dluzhnevskaya. But there was well-known situation: a child was splashed out together with water. This “child” – is the key conclusion of the problem:

is the image of woman character in tricorn tiara really the image of Turkic Goddess Umai?



FIG. 9. TÜRKIC EARRING FROM KOBAYLY



FIG. 10. PERMIAN PLAQUE. GODDESS IN A KOKOSHNIK

The essence of the problem is probably not about the gender of God

(in female or male hypostasis), but in his belonging to Heaven world. There are numerous researches of European paleolithic evidence about the reverence of the Sky in woman's image. However, many facets of Gods' gender inversion, especially in the Neolithic age, are explained by social development. On the basis of numerous artefacts' analysis, A. Golan came to solid conclusion: "It seems doubtless, that from pre-agricultural beliefs of paleolithic tribes of Europe, occurs peculiar to next, the Neolithic age incompatible presentation, that the heaven Goddess procreates flora, which is definitely procreated by the Earth"¹⁷.

Considerable contribution to the development of iconography of Umai image, but in somewhat different aspect, was made by S.G. Skobelev, by discovery of early-medieval Turkic burial ground near Kobaily village in the district of river Abakan. Here he discovered silver with gold plated anthropomorphic earrings, having the form of woman with wings with vessel in her hands and nimbus above her head. (Fig. 9).

Archeologist interprets these images as relating to Umai cult: "canonical pose of the images finds wide reflection in stony monuments of Turks. To the amount of God's distinctive features are referred wings, necessary belonging of this God, nimbus above his head and a cup (with consecrated milk, in which the embryos of the souls of people and animals are kept) in women hands"¹⁸.

In this article the author states, that images with nimbus above head in ancient Turkic culture are met rarely and may be the demonstration of the influence of Nestorianism and Manichaeism on the culture of Sayano-Altai's Turks. However, it is known, that the images of Great Goddess with nimbus above the head are met everywhere among ancient nations: in Europe, Asia, America, Australia from the Eneolithic Period¹⁹. Later the nimbus became ritual headwear, like Russian *kokoshnik*, which is also not occasionally decorated by foil, beads and even precious stones.

The issue of relationship of the variants of iconography of Umai in tricorn tiara and in *kokoshnik* is confirmed by one of the Perm metal plates (Fig. 10), imaging Goddess, staying on pangolin in headwear of the *kokoshnik* type, having outlines of a bird with unfolded wings (instead of three birds or moose cows), images of rays on the body of a bird and

sculpturally made head. The shining, divergent from the image of Goddess is pictured by hatches on *kokoshnik* itself. Russian *kokoshnik* and the crown of Siberian shaman have the same structure: kokoshnik-nimbus and the crown from the bird's feathers reflect the universal symbol of the Sky: shining half circle of day Sky and its hypostasis – the Sun (bird feathers like sun rays)²⁰.



FIG. 11.1. SHAMAN "IN MUSHROOM-SHAPED HAT". KALBAK-TASH, ALTAI



FIG. 11.2 – 4. THE IMAGES OF GREAT GODDESS IN THE POSE OF A WOMAN IN CHILD-BIRTH FROM SPAIN AND ARMENIA



FIG. 11.5. THE ANTHROPOMORPHOUS ROCK VISION IN MUSHROOM-SHAPED HAT WITH SHINING AROUND THE HEAD. NORTH AMERICA

As mentioned above, the state that the costume of priest or shaman contains the symbol of God whom he serves, is the axiom. This state can open the curtain above the riddle, which hasn't been solved by researchers yet: what is the meaning of the vision of people with crooks or bow "in mushroom-shaped hats" on rock altars of Altai – Kalbak-Tash, Elangash, Irbistu (Fig. 11.1), dated by archeologists to the Bronze era. In our opinion, these are the images of shamans or priests of Great Goddess cult of the Bronze era, who is called Umai by Turks, in headwears, symbolizing the Sky (by types of *kokoshniks*). The confirmation of our right thinking are the images of Great Goddess in the pose of a Woman in Child-Birth from Spain and Armenia²¹ in headwears, symbolizing the sky (with rays or without them) (Fig.11.2–4), and anthropomorphous rock vision in mushroom-shaped hat with shining around the head, discovering in North America²² (Fig. 11.5). So, we see analogical by attributes visions of God and priest.

In one of the numerous rock panels of sacral centre Kalbak-Tash, there is the image of a character in mushroom-shaped hat with little rays along contour of the hat (Fig. 12.1), there are also two other similar characters with crooks near moose, the horns of which are having the forms of two suns (Fig. 12.2). Their crooks are the universal attributes of priests as messengers of God's will and mediators between the worlds. We already clarified close connection of the Umai cult with solar cult and images of moose and female maral.



FIG. 12. *KALBAK TASH (ALTAI) RITUAL SCENE WITH CHARACTERS "IN MUSHROOM-SHAPED HAT", PRESUMABLY SHAMANS OF THE GREAT GODDESS CULT.*
(DRAWING PETROGLYPHS BY THE AUTHOR.)

Thus, it's possible to confirm that in Altai territory from the Bronze era (at least), there were sacral centres where worship was offered to the Sky (in woman's hypostasis of Great Goddess), representing the God in different kinds: from archaic Doe (Female Maral, Moose Cow), whose memory is present on rocky altars of Altai, dating to Eneolithic age, and "Goddess with nimbus" (or in *kokoshnik*), is present on artefacts from the Bronze era to the Middle Ages, to "classical" image of Turkic Umai in tricorn tiara. Probably, originally in times of primary monotheism, Great Blue Sky (Turks' Tengri) didn't have gender distinctness, but later its generative and fertility functions took the features of female, and then male Gods.

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MYTHOLOGEME OF THE GRIFFIN— THE CULTURAL CODE OF ANCIENT ALTAI

I.A. ZHERNOSENKO AND O.P. RESHETOVA

ABSTRACT

The article considers one of the controversial semantically ambiguous images of ancient culture of Altai, image of the griffin, penetrating ideologically and magically the entire system of artifacts of the Scythian world. In this study, the authors conclude that the griffin mythologema is not just an attribute of an area of the mythological Universe (the upper or lower worlds, as different researchers define it), but it plays the role of a cultural constant marking the borderline states and moments of "transition" both in social and in sacred senses.

Key words: culturology, mythology, semantics, cosmogony, solar, chthonic, cult, symbol, griffin, the Scythians.

The archeology and ethnography provide a material basis for the study of ancient cultures. But various forms of research are becoming more and more in demand, allowing to restore their spiritual strata, to reconstruct the picture of the world that existed in the minds of people of that time, their values and prohibitions. A man at all times, mastering the natural world, interacting with it, processed information about the environment and himself, reflecting it in the objective world. This "second" world, which man created around himself, is alive, rhythmically pulsating and fading in awe waiting for unknown achievements. It was not fiction of inflamed or intimidated unrecognized irrational consciousness. The model of the world of an ancient man is as reasonable and rational as that of the contemporary one, based on empirical experience and natural laws of being.

The mythological consciousness is ambivalent, a man understanding the laws of universe often extrapolates to the surrounding world (up to cosmic scales) his own qualities and structures; a man creating the real world gives it meanings that go far beyond ordinary everyday life. Therefore, any artifact is not only a “thing in itself”, that testifies to a past era. It is a semantic code, deciphering which, a researcher can “read the epoch” as a text, spreading its social, economic, ethical, religious, sacral and many other aspects. And the real value of such research lies not only in the depth of the study of historical and cultural epoch, but in the definition of the field of culture, where “everything is connected with the rest, all elements are inter-dependent”¹.

An example of such a semantic code is the Scypho-Siberian animal style, with the most characteristic image of animal struggle (so-called, “scenes of torsion.” This style is considered by researchers as “the universal code of real (natural-social) and sacral reality”². The image of an animal is one of the leading subjects in ancient antique (Scythian) and medieval art of nomads. This fact speaks not about the animal ‘s relevance as a hunting object, but about its semantic significance in ritual practice. The cosmogonic myth of the Heavenly Hunter and Sunny Deer, as well as the myth of the Great Mother and Heavenly Maraluch are two main mythological plots that explained the process of origin of the world, and played out during calendar and ancestral mysteries. All other myths and mythological images of the Scypho-Siberian pantheon, their results and reflection as multicolored shining highlights, are different diamond sides (which is colorless, united and indivisible) and the reflection of the all-spreading Light in them.

One of the most mysterious images of the Scypho-Siberian style, marking the Altai culture, is the image of a griffin-fantastic creature, combining elements of a predatory bird (beak and wings) – a griffin, a lion body, an ear and an eye of an animal, and its head is often topped with horns, dragon comb or characteristic crest. Researchers continue to argue over griffin accessory to the solar or chtonic semiosphere. The values of this image are interpreted by researchers on opposing sides: from the absolute good, to the absolute evil. Let ‘s examine their arguments.

The encyclopedia of signs and symbols defines the griffin as a solar image: “The combination of two main solar animals (lion and eagle) indicates the general favorable character of the creature, the griffin represents the Sun, strength, vigilance, military valour, retribution... According to Flavius Filostrat (3rd century), “Griffins do live in India and are honored by being dedicated to the Sun. The chariot of the Sun is harnessed by four griffins.” The griffin united an image of a lion representing a king and a falcon, which was a symbol of the god of heaven Gor in ancient Egyptian tradition. In the late period, the griffin is considered a “powerful animal” and a symbol of justice; in the epoch of Ptolomean and Rome, the gods Gor and Ra were depicted as the griffin”³. The griffin symbolizes power, confidence, insight and vigilance in Greece. The griffin appears with Apollon as a rider. It is also known that the griffin symbolizes the act of rebirth, a new level, finding of youth. Let’s remember this statement. We’ll come back to it later.

The presence of lion elements in the griffin image, in addition to sunlight, royalty and power, reminds that the lion is the guard of sacred places (remember the Egyptian big Sphinx and temple sphinx). The lion represents a restrained energy in deep psychology, this energy is dominant in the attack. In esoteric practices, the lion (even more so, its tail) is a symbol of the snake-like energy, kundalini, which is quietly drumming, turning into a spiral, but in the right time this spiral rapidly flattens, releasing enormous energy. In Pazyryksky culture, the image of a lion is often replaced by the image of a tiger. These are synonymous symbols.

There is another form of Pazyryk griffins, so-called *conevidny* (horse-shaped). B.A. Litvinsky believes that the eagle-headed “conevidny griffin” placed on the vessels is the Iranian equivalent of the “symbol of Ashvin keepers of the elixir of life, medicines and drinks, divine doctors, doctor-gods, handlers of youth and guardians of immortality and “prosperity”⁴. The griffin image on the vessels gives their contents the importance of “divine drink” and “elixir of life” or, in any case, emphasizes the medical nature of the liquid in the vessel and sanctifies it⁵.

What does this type of the griffin in the form of tattoos on the shoulders of the Pazyryk leader and the Ukok priestess mean? The heads

of these griffins are topped with luxurious horns, the branching of which also ends with the heads of griffins (Fig. 1). A horse and a deer act in a single hypostases here, it is confirmed by horse graves in the royal kurgans of Pazyryk. The heads of these horses were topped with deer masks.

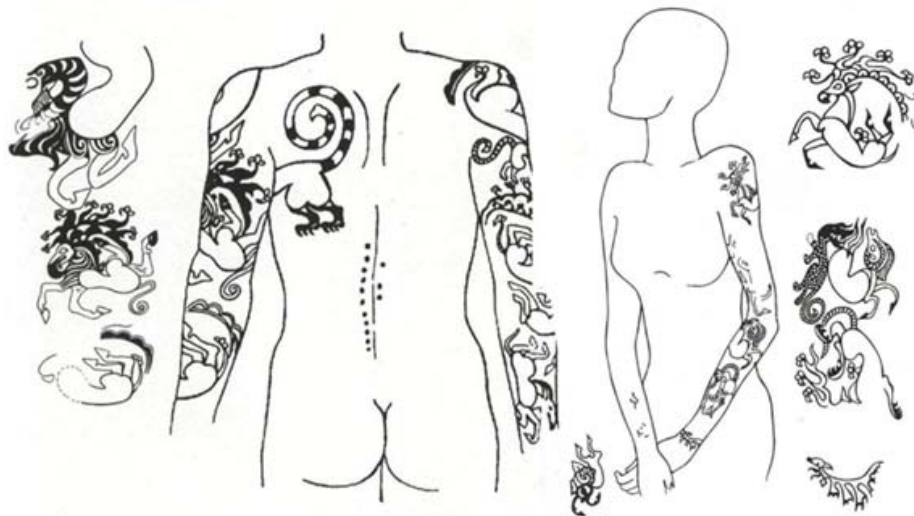


FIG. 1. TATTOOS OF THE PAZYRYK LEADER AND THE UKOK PRIESTESS IN THE FORM OF HORSE-SHAPED GRIFFINS

In Pazyryk culture as in all Eurasian mythology, the cult of deer was very widespread. It started probably even before the Neolithic revolution. Since there was a myth about the deer stealing the sun from the Lord of the underworld, marting through the sky, but still walled by the forces of darkness, which removed the sun and returned it under the ground. The attribute of the burial of the Scythian horse is quite understandable. It is called to play the cosmic myth, the dead leader, most likely, a supreme priest of a solar cult, which was worshipped by the Scythians. After death he must rise in the same way that the sun rises daily, and a sunny deer as a solar “vehicle” will help him to rise. This mythologema is confirmed by the plot among Altai: petroglyphs, the deer with solar horns (Elangash, Irbis-Tuu, etc.) (Fig. 2.1). Maybe that’s why the high-gardened horses of the red and golden color were laid in the leader’s grave.



FIG. 2.1. *ELANGASH. SOLAR DEER.* (PHOTO BY THE AUTHOR)



FIG. 2.2. *TURU-ALTY. DEER WITH A BIRD-SHAPED MUZZLE.* (PHOTO BY THE AUTHOR)

According to A.A. Tishkin's definition, "the horse was a psychopomp (soul guide) taking the soul of the dead man to a different world, as the horse and the man were directed to one side. The horse had a function of resurrection"⁶. The mythologema of the dying and rising sun and its impersonation in the image of the leader and priest confirms the fact that the body of the leader was mummified. It was supposed to be imperishable for the reincarnating deity.

In connection with the above-described attributes of horse-deer and horse-shaped griffin, other images of early Scythian art come up, they are petroglyphs, depicting deer with luxurious branch horns and bird-shaped snout (Fig. 2.2). Moreover, the branches of the horns are ornamentally

curved, like the images of the heads of griffins on the tips of branches of the deer horns on tattoos, there is no detailed drawing on the petroglyphs, but the contour remains. In our opinion a horse-shaped griffin with deer horns and a bird-shaped deer has a single semantic nature. The location of the named griffin on the shoulder belt of the leader and priestess tattooed bodies and bird deer on the southern slant rock ledges (Turu-Alty, Elangash, White Bom), playing the role of altars, emphasize the solar nature of the mythologema of the griffin. But at the same time the griffin is equipped with functions of the conductor traveling around all three worlds and, not only in posthumous practice, but also in lifetime sacralized activity of the called characters.

In general, it became clear that horns are a solar sign. This sign in Pazyryk griffins is often expressed in a slightly different (maybe, even atavistic) form, in the form of a crest or a dragon ridge. But the researchers also highlight a separate species of lion-headed griffin, the predator is depicted with open mouth, its head is topped with curved horns. Modern researchers name winged and horned lions as lion griffins, or simply gryphon⁷. Such images are typical of Front and Central Asia, Mountain Altai and other areas where the Siberian Collection of Peter I⁸ comes from. In many images of cat predators, the horns take the form of small curtains behind the head or projections on top and it is difficult to know the original image of the horned tiger, which is most ornamentally solved in leather applications from the Tuecta barrow (Altai) (Fig. 3.1). But horned griffins more often have ribbed horns, a mural, an open mouth, folds on the upper lips and nose (Fig. 3.2)⁹.

On October 6, 1993, a republican coat of arms was established in the Republic of Altai. In the center of the coat of arms, as established in the Regulation on the State Coat of Arms of the Republic of Altai, is depicted "griffin - Kan-Kerede with a head and wings of the bird and a torso of the lion, representing a sacred sun bird, guarding peace, happiness, wealth of native land, patron of animals, birds and nature"¹⁰. There was a controversy around it, some glorifying and some cursing this symbol. Both sides found convincing arguments in their favor.

Kan-Kerede in Altai mythology is the image of a mighty bird, the



FIG. 3.1. *HORNED TIGER FROM HE TUECTA BARROW*



FIG. 3.2. *LION GRIFFINS IN THE ART OF THE PEOPLES OF ASIA*

king of the feathery birds. Many researchers have noted the connection of this image in the folklore of the peoples of Central Asia with the ancient Indian myth of the bird Garuda, a solar bird with a golden body, wings of dazzling red color, with the head of a man, but with a beak. This bird, the forerunner and king of birds, could speak like a human, possessed the power of magical word and could change its appearance at will. One of the main legends about Garuda is the legend of this bird stealing *soma-amrita*, the drink of immortality, like the Iranian *ashwins* griffin, the keeper of the elixir of life. Thus, in the legend of Garuda we see an undeniable

connection with the image of the Scythian griffin, which repeatedly changes its appearance (griffin, lion, tiger, horse, deer, wolf) and made in Scythian and Siberian products of gold or wood covered with gold foil.

But the correlation of the griffin on the coat of arms of the Republic of Altai with the royal bird of Kan-Kerede did not convince L.S. Marsalodov, who believes that the griffin is the “animal of the dark underground dead astral world,” and that the “purpose of the griffin is to break out of “ oblivion “(from the under ground), to destroy the state, take gold and human lives as much as possible. L.S. Marsalodov’s claim is not baseless. In ancient Egyptian book *On Two Ways*, griffins are mentioned as creatures of the underworld, along with other Chtonic monsters¹¹. The researcher continues: “In no image of Pazyryksky culture of Altai, a griffin is shown as a friend of man or animals, but only their torturer. In numerous ancient Eastern, ancient, medieval images, the griffin also attacks humans (women, monks, rulers, etc.) or peaceful animals. In the figure from the medieval manuscript, the griffin is pressed together with the aspid into the chariot of the god of death Saturn”¹².

L.S. Marsalodov emphasizes that the image of the griffin is shown in burials (especially nobles and leaders), but is absent on rock altars full of petroglyphs. On the one hand, most rock drawings depict deer and mountain goats, a steady solar symbol of ancient Eurasian cultures. However, on one of the most famous rock altars of Altai - Kalbak-Tasha there is an image of Senmurva, a dog-shaped griffin, referring to the era of the Turkic Middle Ages. According to the researchers, Senmurv is “a kind of remission allowing to determine the character and peculiarities of Iranian and Turkic ties in the field of mythology”¹³. On the other hand, the presence of the griffin image in the inventory of the buried leader does not necessarily bear the meanings of destruction.

The researchers of the art of Scythian and Siberian animal style have long noticed the presence of a number of “non-bird” features in the images of griffins, in particular, such as large, “animal” ears not characteristic for birds and disproportionately large eyes identical in shape for a wolf¹⁴. The image of the wolf, by the definition of V.D. Kubarev, “polymorphic in nature. It combines features of both the wolf and the dog, for which, the

air element is close"¹⁵. The Kyrgyz call a wolf *it-kush* (turk. *It* - dog, *kush* - bird)¹⁶. Isn't it a memory of legendary griffins? Eshil names the griffins as "Zeus poultry dogs that don't bark"¹⁷.

In Central Asia, the image of the dog-shaped griffin was spread, along with the eagle-headed "horse-shaped griffin." The perceptions of the Turkic peoples related to winged dogs. The Kyrgyz with the word *kumai* means a snow griffin, a real-life predatory bird from the hawkish family. It is also the name of the fabulous dog, from which no animal can escape, and it is born of a predatory bird or griffin. The mythical dog Kumayyk, born of a bird, is a faithful companion of the Kyrgyz epic heroes Manas and Semetey. The parallel is interesting, the breed of dogs that were named griffins was very highly valued in Europe, they come from Tibetan hunting dogs that were called "Greiffs." It is a so-called, falcon dog, a dog that is used on the hunt along with the catching birds¹⁸.

There is an image of the wonderful hunting dog Hubai-hus hatched from the egg of the turpan in Hakass fairy tales. No living thing can get away from her. The tale does not explicitly state that this dog named Hubai-hus is winged, but bird features are embedded in the history of her birth¹⁹. M.I. Borgoyakov deals with the etymology of the word Hubai and associates it with the deity of the Sayano-Altai Tyrok, "Mother Umai," living in heaven and guarding the babies. Another meaning of the term Umai is a mythical bird that nests in the air. It brings Umai closer to the Iranian heavenly mythological bird Humai, which, casts its shadow on man, makes him happy²⁰. We will not also forget the Kyrgyz name of the griffin – *kumai*, and dog named Kumayyk, born of a bird. M.I. Borgoyakov believes that the image of the dog-bird widely existed on the vast spaces of Eurasia in the Tagar era²¹.

The prototype of winged dogs was one of the most common characters in Iranian mythology, Senmurv-Paskunj, an image we also meet on medieval silver vessels²². The connection between Umai and Senmurva manifests in their functional essence, these winged beings are associated with fertility on Earth. The image of Umai in the same context is considered by D.W. Cheremisin. He points to the dualism of this image, genetic continuity between the image of the griffin and the representations of the

Turks about the female deity Umai, without doubt about the connection of the goddess Kmai and the winged dog Hubai²³.

The cult of the dog is considered in ethnography in two aspects: the first has to do with mythology of the era of maternal genus (dog-ancestor) and the second one as the driver of the dead in the burial cult. The image of wolf (dog) is present in cultures of different peoples and almost always acts in connection with the underground world (Anubis, Tserber, dog Yama, taigyls Azar and Kazar - watchdogs at the roots of Bai Terek, the World Tree in the Altai epic *Maadai Kara*). Perhaps this is due to the fact that many wolves, jackals eat carrion, i.e., move to the underground world. In the ordinary world view of many peoples, the howling of dogs or wolves presupposes death. The Zoroastrians exposed the bodies of the dead to dogs and birds for eating. All these facts lead to the conclusion that many peoples honored the dog as a totem - an ancestor who went into the world of another, a defender of descendants, and therefore also an "escorted," a "featherweight," a "guard," as well as a "scavenger" and a "burial".

The real bird griffin, which lives in the Altai Mountains, is a large vulture. It eats drop, and its voice is similar to that of a dog²⁴. And perhaps these circumstances combine griffins with wolves and jackals, as well as such imprudent features of the griffins as the shape of the ears of predatory beast, corresponding to the shape of wolf ears in the Pazyryk iconography, caused chthonic interpretation of images of griffins by some researchers and contributed to localization of these images in the three-part model of the world, in its lower part, and, with certain functions of the guard, conductor and burial.

As a guard, the griffin acts in myths and legends of different traditions. It, like a dragon, protects the way to salvation, being located next to the Tree of Life or other similar symbol. He guards treasures or hidden, secret knowledge. "Snakes, dragons, griffins, guarding treasures," writes M. Eliade, "always guard the paths to immortality, because gold, diamonds, and pearls are symbols that embody the sacral beginning and give strength, life, and grant omniscience"²⁵. Already in the first reference to griffins belonging to Herodotus (V century BC), it is said that these monsters with lion bodies and eagle wings and claws, which live in the

far north of Asia and guard gold deposit against one-eyed *arimasps* (fabulous inhabitants of the north). Here we can find an answer to the message of L.S. Marsadolov. The royal burials of the Pazyryks, which were the richest treasures, and now make up a significant part of the collection of the Golden Pantry of the Hermitage, have images of griffins.

“There was an image of the huge bird Anzud, an eagle with a lion ‘s head (which was often depicted as a claw of two deer or other animals) in Sumero-Akkad mythology (the myth of Lugalband). The Anzud bird was given the function of mediating between heaven and earth, people and gods; this bird was regarded in this capacity as a creature ambivalent, simultaneously embodying both evil and good beginnings”²⁶.

Even L.C. Marsadolov, despite his commitment to the chthonic interpretation of the image of the griffin, mentions the mediating function of both the griffin and the man who wore his sign: “On the body of the leader buried in Pazyryk-2 and probably also acting as a priest or shaman, were applied a tattoo not just” fantastic images, “but perhaps seen from the astral world”²⁷.

In later cultures, the dual nature of griffin gets its development in unexpected angles. Thus, his portrayal was sometimes used as a designation of Christ’s double nature; it was a symbol of science and usury; became one of the main emblems of the English royal house; and was also the traditional motif of Gothic church sculpture. In heraldry, it symbolizes the combined qualities of an eagle and a lion, they are buddity and bravery, differing female winged griffin and male, depicted without wings²⁸. Beckler (1688 y.) deciphers the griffin as follows: “Griffins are depicted with the lion ‘s torso, eagle head, long ears and claw eagle paws, which should mean joining mind and power”²⁹.

The oldest image of the griffin is found on the wall of the Mesopotamian temple. A number of researchers from here bring out another significant meaning: “It may be that this image of the Mesopotamian guard in ancient-Iranian mythology is intertwined with such a concept as Avestian *khvarno* - charisma, sacral power, a sign of regal power, for simple people it is a symbol of good luck, protection”³⁰. Each family, every genus and country had its own *khvarno*. It is very often

a bird of Varagne acts as *khvorny* in Avesta. In later Sasanian times it was depicted as a mountain argali Farn³¹. According to researchers there was an ancient Iranian concept of *hvarnaya* in cultures of the Skiphs and the Sachs³². From 5th century BC, the images of the winged and horned cat predator are distributed on the territory of Southern Siberia. Many of these images are in the Pazyryk Kurgans, graves of the nobility of Skiph time in Mountain Altai. It is possible that the griffin acts here as a symbol of power and military power of Tsars of the Scythian tribes inhabiting steppes and mountains of Southern and Western Siberia. In their opinion, the griffin acted as an obereg, a symbol of good luck, *khvarno*.

In our view, these diverse, often diametrically opposed points of view have quite a convincing explanation. The griffin is always depicted in the upper sphere of three-part models of the world: on the diadema, which decorated the headgear of the warrior, on the neck decoration, *hryvnia*, *pectoralis*, on the shoulder belt of the body of the leader or priestess in the form of a virtuoso tattoo; in the removal of a horse by harness, decorations, a saddle cushion (connecting the horse and the rider); on gold and silver vessels, etc. All this points to its heavenly (cosmic) origin. But at the same time, it often acts as an aggressive entity, rubbing hoof animals (representing the forces of light, sunlight). Here again the most ancient and universal for all cultures and epochs archetype of fight of light and darkness is remembered, later received impersonation in mythology of draconobury.



FIG. 4. THE FOREHEAD HORSE DECORATION FROM THE TUEKTA MOUND

Everything in the world has a rhythm, in a pot alternates darkness and light, peace and movement, Yin and Yang. The same idea is confirmed by the forehead decoration of the horse from the Tuektinsky mound (Fig. 4), where two griffins in rapid rotation form a figure similar to the symbol Yin – Yang. The “core of light originates in the center of this “spin”³³, the primary substance that arises at the moment of “transition from nothingness to being,” the manifestation of the information “matrix” that lies in the heart of the material world. Practically, in all sacred texts of the ancient world the moment of the beginning of world creation is described equally. The Bible is the most common: “...The earth was visible and empty, and darkness over the abyss. And the Spirit of God was over her. And God said, ‘Let there be light’. Also there was light...”³⁴.



FIG. 5. *ULANDRYK DIADEM*

Then the symbolism of the griffin as the primary Chaos, the Absolute Nothing in which the whole Cosmos is laid in potency, becomes clear. This is how, at the end of the 20th century, physicists explain the process of world creation. Scientists have proved that in addition to gravitational and electromagnetic fields, there is another universal field, torsion field that is generated by spin, or angular moment of rotation. Torsion fields arise in a specific material environment, a physical vacuum filling the entire space of the universe. Torsion fields have a number of unusual properties, such as memory, propagation through natural environments without loss and change, it has the highest speed, more than a million times then the speed of light. The torsion field is the basis for the transition of intangible information structures into material ones: light - energy -

matter. It seems that the unknown Skiph artists were able to express graphically and plastically the formulas of one of the newest sciences that emerged at the turn of the II-III millennium, it is a theory of physical vacuum.



FIG. 6. THE FOREHEAD HORSE DECORATION FROM THE PAZYRYK MOUND

And then the Ulandryk diadem (Fig. 5), by the subtlety and grace of the work superior to many artistic samples of much later epochs, embodies not the scene of the pursuit of predators (griffin and tiger) after an unhappy deer, but cosmic mystery: light, the basis of being, is embodied through the hypostases of a deer and a tiger ("fast, bright" and "power, fire"). But light is born in darkness and invariably passes into darkness. Everything in the world has a rhythm Yin - Yang. In the maximum manifestation of light, there is always a grain of darkness into which it will surely pass, just as chaos contains the potency of the Cosmos, which will mark the birth of light. And the griffin itself, often possessing a lion's body, will dismantle its heavenly, light-bearing function, staying until the pore, until time in potency.

And amazing in beauty and grace of the forehead horse decoration from the Pazyryk mound in the form of a grope, swallowing the head of

a deer (Fig. 6) is not a terrible scene of torsion, but the embodiment of cosmic rhythm, fresh and wise in its harmony. Darkness, which has absorbed Light will dissipate, the Death will be replaced by a new Life, just as in the morning the Sun rises, “dead” the day before in the womb of the Dungeon.

And the same story is repeated in Skiph society. The dead leader or supreme priest, does not cease to care for his people, he returns to this world in a new capacity as an ancestor-guardian. His mound is a temple, representing, like all temples, a model of the World Mountain, whose womb protects (buries) the treasure, the son or god’s deputy, who becomes God after death. But it is also a bosom which gives birth to this new God. Let us remember Christ, buried in a cave and resurrected in a new capacity. This is also remembered by the modern indigenous peoples of Altai, claiming that the Ancestral Mountain every spring “unlocks the buttons of its coat,” releasing into the world the souls of newly born people, animals and birds.

Therefore, the image of the griffin in the burial attribute of the Scythian leaders is not accidental, the griffin is a concept of transition, rebirth, reaching a new level, getting rid of the past, acquiring new qualities. To conclude, the authors of this article define the place of the griffin mythologema in Pazyryk culture as some cultural constant, marking border states and moments of “transition” both in social and sacral meanings. The author makes her arguments based on the existing concepts and paths of the mythologema, besides using the methods of semiotic and system analysis. This conclusion allows to see the systemacity and multilevelness of the griffin mythologema and to explain the polarity of its interpretations by different researchers.

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ETIOLOGIC MYTHOLOGY AS THE BASIS OF ALTAI ETHNOS'S WORLD VIEW

E.A. POLYAKOVA AND N.A. GEKMAN

ABSTRACT

The problems of survival and development of ethnos define the discovery of its world view, which characterizes its resilience and vitality. Ethnic identity and entirety are based on nationalities' mythological memory, because mythological world view is the first historical type. Altai ethnos, which united the representatives of different ethnic groups of native and small nationalities of Altai, is characterized by archaic nature of world view, domination of pre-industrial forms of world's picture. There is a description of etiological mythological plots and their analysis. The authors analyse the influence of etiological mythology on the formation and development of the ethnos world view paradigm.

Keywords: etiological mythology, world view, ethnos, Altai, sacral values, heroic epos.

There is tendency of increasing interest in ethnos and ethnicity's problems in the modern era. It is connected with actualization of ethnic and inter-ethnic relations in the modern state's policy. The program documents of Russian Federation, such as "Basic Principles of Cultural State Policy", "Russian National Security Doctrine" declare the security of Russian ethnic cultural diversity, their heritage, traditions of mental-moral and common structures.

In spite of 20th century's set patterns about "losing step by step the significance of the ethnicity factor due to modernization processes", modern history shows, that "ethnicity not only didn't lose its attitudes in modern ethnic and cultural life, but it greatly strengthened them"¹. Resilience and vitality of ethnos are defined by its adaptability to changeable

socio-political, socio-economic and socio-cultural situations. The basis of adaptability of any society is world view paradigm – “the common worldview conceptions about nature and spatio-temporal characteristics of the existence, about cause-and-effect links of events and things, about human and his abilities, valuable attitudes towards God, world, society, oneself and another one, appropriate for definite epoch”².

The first historical type of world view was mythological. Indissoluble sacral connection of natural events and human's life lies in its basis. So, on the one hand human qualities regarding the surrounding world, on the other hand the animation of natural powers occurs. Mythological consciousness sacralizes the origin's processes of the Universe, Earth and human. From the perspective of sacredness, not only natural phenomena but also life, destiny, death of a human and the issues of moral and duty as well, are explained. Thus, the understanding of ethnic identity and entirety, the basis of which is formed by traditions and beliefs, is based on mythological nation's memory on the whole and on its sacral component in particular. The heathen beliefs of different nationalities and pre-heathen religious forms, such as totemism and its later forms zoolatry and phytolatry, and animism as well, emphasized the proximity of human and nature, understanding the co-relation of everything in the world. For example, beliefs that each kin originated from the great beast-ancestor (the Ashina kin in Altai mythology, Romulus and Rem, suckled by a she-wolf in Rome mythology, etc.) or the plant (the World Tree cult in different mythological systems or plants' animation). All that emphasized the human's understanding of his place, his role in nature, and his inextricable connection both with it, and with previous and next generations.

One of the perfect examples of mythology's etiologic component as the basis of world view paradigm is Altaic ethnos, unifying the representatives of local and small ethnic groups living in Altai – ancestral homeland of Turk nations. The religion of Ataians – is the symbiosis of several beliefs from original: shamanism, pantheism, the Tengri cult, Burkhanism, Christianity, Buddhism and Islam. It should be noted that the influence of monotheistic religions didn't destroy sacral basis of Altaians' world view – the nature's apotheosis. The modern researchers

notice that "Altaians' world view is characterized by archaism, domination of pre-industrial forms of world's picture. The main feature of their world view – environmental friendliness, displaying deep connection with ethnic habitat, vivification and spiritualization of Altai's nature goes on existing in reality"³. The confirmation of that is the mythology of Altai nationalities, which is widespread in modern social practice. Altaic mythology in contrast with mythologies of many other more ancient cultures has not been discovered completely. It deserves closer look because exactly in it is kept safe the integrity of world's perception, where the human, being part of nature doesn't destroy, but saves it. Professor L.P. Gekman in the work *Mythology and Folklore of Altai* explains this thought: "...mythological or traditional consciousness allows ethnos to realize itself as integrity. The integrity in its turn supposes the knowledge as not only the history of own ethnos foundation but also the sources of world existence in which it had appeared and formed"⁴. The Altai mythology more than others, is characterized by understanding and sensation of being "alive". According to L.P. Gekman such sensation precedes the formation of the notions "life", "existence" and traditional consciousness includes natural objects into the context of the human existence, admitting the priority of the first ones as eternal in regard to human existence and therefore they are given by above human's sense and functions⁵.

Etiological (explanatory) myths are presented in the mythologies of different traditional cultures. Such myths, in the classification of E.M. Meletinskiy, are the texts, explaining the appearance of different natural and cultural peculiarities, social objects. Etiological function of a myth is universal, but the given group, as a rule, unites the plots about the peculiarities of the relief, habits and appearance of the animals. In Altai mythology (as in many polytheistic religions), the above mentioned idea of nature's animation is present. Cosmogonical, antropogonical and etiological myths are often united just by the motive of animated, alive, given by superhuman qualities of nature.

So, it was considered that the mountains grow, can move from place to place, fight, get married and so on, just as people do, but the mountains are both a shelter and protection for a human, and if you remember the

legend about the origin of Turks, then a mountain-cave gives life to the founder of ethnos⁶. For example, each mountain of Altai has its name and mythical biography, based on the common popular belief. According to the mythological plots, in ancient times there lived epic heroes on the land having an unusual strength. After the flood the land became soft and couldn't hold the giants. Then the bodies of the epic heroes turned into mountains and the spirit of each of the heroes was put into the mountains (*tu-eezi, tag-eezi*). Mythological consciousness of ethnos creates corresponding cycles of narratives about mountain-epic heroes and the spirits of the mountains.

L.P. Gekman in the work *Mythology and folklore of Altai* remarks, that each kin had its mountain, which was a kind of accumulator of all life of the kin's territory. A mountain was perceived as the kin's root, his base. Altaians believed that in the depth of the mountain there hang cradles with the souls of future children. The mountains were also connected with a death – they buried the dead in the mountain caves. Thus, a mountain closed the life circle of a human: the one who came out of it, returned there⁷.

There is a special category of legends about mountains, which is connected with the spirit-protector of the place, guarding the kin and explaining its origin. A.M. Sagalaev in his work *Altai in the mirror of myth*, states the following legend: "... Once upon a time Babirgan (the mountain on the left bank of the Katun) decided to get married and proposed himself to the daughter of the Abagan mountain. Not having managed to find a ransom for the bride, Babirgan just stole her and ran. Running he stumbled and was almost caught by Abagan not far from the river-head of the Salton. At that place the mountain with an eloquent name Te-idi (hooked by legs) was formed. Thirty miles from that mountain Babirgan crossed the Biya, but the pursuit is behind him and he abandons his bride. Having caught his daughter, Abagan wanted to cut her, but she asked for mercy: *Kespe!* (Don't cut!). Due to this, this name has a mountain near the village Lebyazhye (Swan-white). Abagan took his daughter with him, but she seemed to be a burden in the pursuit. He tied her (*puulgan*), and in that way the name of the hill became Puulgan. Then Abagan began to survey

the locality in search of the fugitive. Having seen running Babirgan, Abagan said: "Here he is reddening". The place, where he pointed – is the mountain Kizaryk (Reddening)...Having heard his voice, Babirgan ran to the right, in the direction to the village Srostki, saw the passage across the Katun, jumped over the river. But here because of his excessive efforts, his scrotum was torn off and thus around hillock was formed on the vast flat place (Tazhak) near the village Setovka. Abagan having seen that burst out laughing, didn't jump over the Katun and returned home."⁸.

L.P. Gekman, analyzing the legend, came to the conclusion, that "the motive of pursuit is necessary for designation of the mountains and hills on the definite territory"⁹. She thinks that such a plot is used for the explanation of appearing and naming the objects. She considered a resembling, but more complicated legend, explaining not only the origin and name of the relief, but also the correlation of a man and a mountain (a man and nature): "...Once upon a time at the mountain Kyzyl-gaya (Red) there lived nine brothers. Two of them went to earn their living to taiga. They took such a great interest in hunting, that they forgot about the time, and when they descended the *belki* (peaks covered with snow), they saw the breaking up of ice in the rivers and the grass grew up to their knees. The hunters decided that it was already the second spring, since they went hunting. Brothers hurried home and when they returned they learnt that their families were not alive any more. The wife of one of the brothers had got married for second time. The brothers were so angry that they killed both the wife and her new husband. Having seen such a lawless action, Kyzyl-gaya stained with blood. The kin of the murderers was cursed and since then there was no more than one son in their families"¹⁰.

The second legend more clearly observes the motive "prohibition-allowance", binary opposition "order-chaos", which is one of the mythological world view of motives. In the universal position "order-chaos" the first category meant the world assimilated by a human. The main task of the motive "prohibition-allowance" is not to admit the penetration of chaotic elements into the fixed order, to protect from the attempt to violate the prohibition so as not to draw upon yourself the

wrath of Gods or spirits-keepers of natural objects. However, to violate the order, fixed by natural forces, by the spirit-keeper of the land is not so easy. In the heroic epos *Maadai-Kara* the scoundrel Kara-kula who enslaved and drove the people of Altai into slavery, makes up his mind to change, to destroy the sacred kin attributes, but fails as the nature of the native land resists the alien-invader ¹¹.

In world mythology not only a mountain, but a tree too are the basic artistic and cultural symbols and present themselves as the Axis of the Universe. In Altai mythology such a tree is located on the peak of Belukha, where *Altay-eezi* lives (the spirit-host of Altai). Paying honour to a tree, its perception as the centre of the world is spread all over the world culture. Thus, the sacred ash-tree Iggdrasil – is the centre and Axis of the World in the Scandinavian mythology. Its crown rises till the place of God's dwelling – to the sky, its trunk personifies the life of a middle world, and its roots stretch to the underground world. In India a sacred tree at the mountain Meru, Asvattha – was honoured, in Egypt it was a golden tree, in China it was mulberry tree, on which lived Sikhe – the goddess-mother of ten suns. Slavs worshipped the sacred tree of Perun, i.e., an oak tree – its re-interpreted image is saved not only in epic poetry but also in fairy-tales, i.e., desacralized texts.

Apotheosis of the sacred tree forms the cult of a tree on the whole. Forest-offence of large trees was and is considered a crime. The empathy of a tree leads to transferring in it the quality characteristics of a human. It was considered that a tree might feel a pain, that it could feed a baby, etc. In ancient Chinese books it is stated that the trees bleed under the stroke of an axe, in epic about Gilgamesh (Mesopotamia) Enkidu hears the moan of the chopped down cedars. In the Slav tradition a great number of customs are connected with the cult of trees, which determine if it is possible to chop down a tree for building a house, to determine the trees as sacred, etc.

The poplar with a hundred trunks is considered to be an eternal tree, a sacred tree of Altai. In heroic legend *Maadai-Kara*, the description of this poplar is given, which pierces by itself and joins three worlds. Its characteristics are very expressive: "a hundred trunked poplar-giant",

the leafage of which “jingles by silver” and “shines by gold”. The poplar tree is connected with the celestial world which is symbolized by “prophetic cuckoos” – soothsayers of Gods’ will; by the ground world, which is personified by “two black golden eagles” – the guards of the native land. And the underground world whose borders are guarded by “two black watchdogs”. They are the guards of evil creatures¹².

Above-mentioned plots present the intricacy of the complex analysis, in view of their polythematics. According to L.P. Gekman, in conformity with a myth, an integral analysis is impossible in principle. It is possible either to transfer the plot or analyze an ancestral phenomenon (the image of the world tree, the image of a mountain, etc.). At the same time, etiologic myths of Altai explain variety of the earthy reality’s events, emphasizing the sacrality of nature and natural phenomena in Altaians’ culture.

Thus, taking into consideration all the above statements, we may state that the plots of etiologic mythology present themselves as an original sacral basis of an ethnic world view paradigm. Laid in the Altai mythology world view values, connected with apotheosis and spiritualization of nature, close connection of a human with it had formed special moral-ethical foundations, which consolidated Altaic ethnos under united aegis of nature and human entity. This sacral connection defined high adaptive ethnos potential, promoting its resilience and vitality.

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OLD BELIEVERS OF ALTAI IN THE PRE-SOVIET PERIOD

L.N. MUKAEVA

ABSTRACT

The article deals with the history of the followers of the Old Rite of mountainous Altai in the pre-Soviet period. The Old Believers of Altai have represented a specific sub-ethnic group belonging to the Old-Rite persuasion of Siberia. The remoteness from the center of the country, economic interest of the authorities in their loyalty, the opportunity for them to take refuge in the Chinese borderland were important factors in the history of the followers of the Dissent (Raskol) who had settled in the Altai mountains. The cultural, historical, economic, and social peculiarities of their situation and their traditions provided for the development in the south of Altai of the Old Believers' self-reliant and self-sufficient economy and culture. The Old Believers have made significant contribution to the formation of the Russian national spiritual culture of Siberia.

Key words: Old Believers, Uimon Valley, Belovodye legends, Old-Believers' eschatology.

From the 1660s, that is when Patriarch Nikon's church reforms began to be implemented, which he introduced with the purpose of bringing the literary and liturgical practices of the Russian Orthodox Church in conformity with those existing in the Greek church, the Old Rite or *Raskol* (the Russian for "schism", "dissent") became part of history and culture of Russia.¹ The developments following the Reform of the Church drove part of the population into the fold of the so called Old Faith, or Old Rite – they became Old Believers [*Starovery* in Russian, *Staroobriadtsy* – "followers of the Old Rite, of the Old (or Ancient) Observances"] or *Schismatics* (Dissenters, *Raskolniki*).

Opposition to the church reform put the Old Believers condemned

by the ecclesiastical synods as heretics, in a very difficult situation. The basic elements of the authorities' attitude toward the Old Believers were formed as early as the church reform itself, that is in the 1660s, and it proceeded from the perception of the Dissent as sedition and threat to the state². Tough and uncompromising policies of Peter I as well as his effort at Europeanization of the country, with shaving off beards and introduction of tobacco smoking, did not promote the establishment of any better relations between the authorities and that group of population³. The introduction of a system of severe measures against them was partly caused by the Old Believers' extreme unyieldiness that would quickly and easily grow into fanaticism. It was to a considerable degree that the dissenters themselves provoked tough attitudes and repression against them; and in response to the persecution they demonstrated such manifestations of fanaticism as self-immolation en mass (it came to be called *zapb* ("burning", "incineration") in Russian) that the Old Believers' leaders proclaimed "the second and non-defiling baptism"⁴.

Thus, whilst the government would put the leaders of the Schism to death, the Old Believers themselves rejected any compromise with the state by way of taking their own lives, by burning themselves alive. The government's severe policies towards the Old Believers were confronted with most fierce resistance that took on a tinge of eschatologism. This sort of intolerance on their part sprang from their religious outlook. The doctrines of the nearing end of the world and the henchmen of the Antichrist having gained absolute power on the earth issued fierce accusatory sermons against the authorities and the Russian Orthodox Church. Already in the passionate sermons of Archpriest Avvakum, this protest was directed against particular representatives of the absolute monarchy – the "Nikonian" Tsars⁵.

The Russian Old Believers sincerely believed that the last days had come after the church reforms of Patriarch Nikon. The entire first generation of the proponents of the dissent lived in visions, portents, forebodings, apocalyptic guesstimates, prophecies and delusions. For the Old Believers, these years marked the end of "Sacred History and the beginning of a new time devoid of the grace"⁶. Confident that they were

experiencing the “end of the world”, the leaders of the Raskol openly denounced the first Patriarch Nykon, the then Tsar Alexei Mikhailovich, as the Antichrist and soon the most suitable candidature for the role of the Antichrist was found in the person of Emperor Peter I⁷. Those who belonged to the official Church, were in the authorities or served in the military, were considered by them servants and accomplices of Satan. In the 17th century already, Old Believers completely rejected the power of the state that, according to their teachings, fell under the hands of the Antichrist⁸. The preachers of *Raskol* openly called for disobedience to the state, to avoid the censuses, refusal to pay taxes, and, during Tsar Peter the Great’s reign, agitated against the introduction of passports and recruitment to the army, and afterwards against the inoculation for smallpox, and in most modern period against Personal Taxation IDs, computers and other such signs of the “last time before the end of the world”. The branding marks, that by the decree of Peter the Great were branded on the left hand of those who evaded military service, smallpox inoculation marks, passports, all seemed to them the mark of the Antichrist⁹.

In the 18th century, the principle meaning of life for the Old Believers became preservation of the old faith and the traditional way of life that started to be identified with the “true” Orthodox Christianity, which they called the “ancient fatherly faith.” That is why they cherishingly preserved books of ancient print, and old pre-Nikonian icons. In south Altai, very characteristic examples would include concealing spiritual treasures, in anticipation of searches by the authorities, in bags of flour that were then placed at the bottom of mountain lakes, where they could be stored for months or even years; hiding books or icons in ovens, to set fire to the firewood in the oven when representatives of the authorities should enter the house, so that nobody would lay hands on their holy objects¹⁰. Since salvation amidst the contemporary Russian reality was considered impossible, the Old Believers fled to the remotest regions of the Russian empire. Initially they became attracted to the thinly populated Siberia with its very weak administrative control. So, the fleeing of Old Believers to the forested mountains of Siberia became a mass phenomenon from

the last quarter of the 17th century¹¹. There, the Old Believers created a network of safe houses, that fit well “in the Siberian tradition of *zaimka*-type squatting agriculture”¹². Peter I in 1716 – 1718 AD, levied the populations that pertained to the Dissent with a double poll tax, only to be canceled in 1782 AD, as well as a fee for the right to wear a beard and a fine for failure to turn up for the ritual of confession. The response was a wave of mass self-immolations that swept through Western Siberia (the Eluninskaya burning of 1723 being a notable example), the increasing number of hermitages and “sketes”, wherefrom a most fanatical preaching was being sent forth of the Antichrist and his ultimate coming to power in Russia. Peter I’s reforms led to the massive migration of the Old Believers beyond the Urals. Many centres of population in Altai were founded by the dissenters who fled to Siberia under Peter the Great. It was during Peter’s time that the south of Western Siberia became, according to church authorities, the “bottom of the schism”. In the later period, which saw the settlement of these parts by the Russian population, the Old Believers carefully guarded themselves from too close contact or neighboring with the newcomers, fearing “обмирщение” (secularization, profanation) of their life that they deemed would be fatal for them. In the pre-Soviet times, when the “worldly” neighborhood was perceived as too stifling, whole groups of the Old Believers would leave the well-inhabited places in order to seek spiritual salvation in other climes, such as the Altai mountains, or sometimes even beyond Russia: e.g., Uryankhay Territory (now Tuva) or China.

The founding of Omsk in 1715, Semipalatinsk in 1718, Ust-Kamenogorsk in 1720, of the Bukhtarminskaya fortress (in 1761) and other Cossack fortresses in Altai contributed to the dissenters’ trying to go as far away as possible from the reach of the authorities. The ancestors of the Uimon Old Believers have been known to try at first taking refuge in the taiga of the Kuznetsk region. But the appearance in these parts of parties of the Cossacks forced them to migrate to the more remote mountains of Altai. Their first halt was on the western slopes of the Kholzun ridge, but then they moved to the impregnable southern spurs of the Katun ridge, from which flowed the Bukhtarma river with its numerous tributaries

the last quarter of the 17th century¹¹. There, the Old Believers created a network of safe houses, that fit well “in the Siberian tradition of *zaimka*-type squatting agriculture”¹². Peter I in 1716 – 1718 AD, levied the populations that pertained to the Dissent with a double poll tax, only to be canceled in 1782 AD, as well as a fee for the right to wear a beard and a fine for failure to turn up for the ritual of confession. The response was a wave of mass self-immolations that swept through Western Siberia (the Eluninskaya burning of 1723 being a notable example), the increasing number of hermitages and “sketes”, wherefrom a most fanatical preaching was being sent forth of the Antichrist and his ultimate coming to power in Russia. Peter I’s reforms led to the massive migration of the Old Believers beyond the Urals. Many centres of population in Altai were founded by the dissenters who fled to Siberia under Peter the Great. It was during Peter’s time that the south of Western Siberia became, according to church authorities, the “bottom of the schism”. In the later period, which saw the settlement of these parts by the Russian population, the Old Believers carefully guarded themselves from too close contact or neighboring with the newcomers, fearing “обмирщение” (secularization, profanation) of their life that they deemed would be fatal for them. In the pre-Soviet times, when the “worldly” neighborhood was perceived as too stifling, whole groups of the Old Believers would leave the well-inhabited places in order to seek spiritual salvation in other climes, such as the Altai mountains, or sometimes even beyond Russia: e.g., Uryankhay Territory (now Tuva) or China.

The founding of Omsk in 1715, Semipalatinsk in 1718, Ust-Kamenogorsk in 1720, of the Bukhtarminskaya fortress (in 1761) and other Cossack fortresses in Altai contributed to the dissenters’ trying to go as far away as possible from the reach of the authorities. The ancestors of the Uimon Old Believers have been known to try at first taking refuge in the taiga of the Kuznetsk region. But the appearance in these parts of parties of the Cossacks forced them to migrate to the more remote mountains of Altai. Their first halt was on the western slopes of the Kholzun ridge, but then they moved to the impregnable southern spurs of the Katun ridge, from which flowed the Bukhtarma river with its numerous tributaries

and the Upper Katun, the section of which down to the mouth of the Koksu river was called locally the Uimon. Here, amidst impenetrable forests, in the mountain gorges and valleys hard of access, the followers of the Old Faith could live and perform their rites unmolested¹³. The area around the upper parts of Bukhtarma and Katun that was being inhabited by the Old Believers came to be known as the *Kamen* (Stone), and those who were coming to take refuge there were called *kamenstchiki* (stonemen)¹⁴. From the year 1726, the influx of Old Believers into the “Kamen” was facilitated considerably by the founding by the Demidovs entrepreneur family of the mineral extraction industry in the southwestern part of that area¹⁵. At the Demidovs’ enterprises, thousands of dissenters were skulking. Transfer of the Altai mining ventures from Demidov to the Cabinet lands fund in 1747 brought about the Old Believers’ special attitude to mining industry. The Old Believers reckoned that it was the “Antichrist” who had become the ruler in Russia who was tormenting them with labor in the mines and plants. That was why those “bergals” (mining and plant workers) who adhered to the Old Belief would flee to the Altai mountains. Besides the workers, among those who fled beyond high rocky ranges were soldiers deserting their indefinitely long terms of service and others. Fugitives would run to the “Stone” in large companies. The West Siberian administration made attempts to put an end to the independent existence of dissenters’ communities there. But all efforts at eliminating the “stonemens” villages proved unsuccessful. Cossack detachments sent to capture the fugitives did not, with rare exceptions, succeed in catching anyone and only ended up burning settlements and destroying the crops. Thus, the Old Believers established themselves firmly on the southern slopes of the Altai mountains. The impregnable ranges of the Upper-Katun uplands became for the Old Believers that “wilderness” where they hoped to find salvation from the world in which the Antichrist reigned.

In the Upper-Katun district, the runaway Old Believers made an encounter with the representatives of the cattle-breeding cultures – the heirs of the medieval civilizations of Central Asia. In the late 18th century, the Chinese empire, having destroyed the nomadic Dzungarian empire in the middle of the century, began to lay claims to the region. For a long

time it was a buffer zone between China and Russia, with no exact delimitation of the frontier taking place. Despite their rather long presence, the Chinese proved unable to secure the region. Setting up posts for guarding the frontier was the only business they managed to perform. The Russian government's measures taken to populate and develop the area were not successful either. But what the two powerful empires failed to do, was accomplished by the members of a fugitive dissent.

Here, the Old Believers built hunting and fishermen's cabins, followed with permanent dwellings, barns, bath-houses, and small mills. The first Raskolniki's settlements were small, counting merely a few households scattered across the mountain valleys and gorges of the Upper-Katun upland. In a very short time, the area was covered with population centres. The nucleus of the Old Believers' settlement in "Kamen" became the village of Fykalka. This "foremother of Russian mountain settlements of the Raskolniki", as G.D. Grebenshchikov phrased it, was originally named Big Village. Contrary to that name, it only counted seven households¹⁶. The small mountain hamlets, only a few houses big, became a dream place for the plant workers and the "attached peasants" (peasants attached to work at mines and industrial plants) of Altai. Enterprising and daring people hoped to build beyond the "Stone" sustainable households firmly that would stand firmly on their feet. The majority of the "stone-men" were Old Believers. The others, even those who belonged initially to the official Orthodox Christian religion, went over to the Dissent under the influence of their fellow-settlers. The numbers of fugitives flocking to the mountains increased rapidly, and so did the number of mountain settlements.

Free societies of the Upper Katun "stone-men" lived for almost half a century without any "guardianship" on the part of the authorities. The confrontation between the "stone-men" and the state ended early in the 1790s, and it ended on the Old Believers' initiative, because what they needed was the introduction of more stability into their life in the borderland. The Old Believers had managed to create a complex integrated economy, which allowed them to live comfortably in the harsh climatic conditions of the highlands of the Bukhtarma and the Upper Katun rivers.

Petty goods economy once created in the Old Believers' settlements paved the way for further development and building up the economy based on agricultural production with hunting, fishing and wild fruit gathering as important attachments to it. But all that required legal guarantees that only state power could provide¹⁷. The shakiness of their borderland existence, and the general insecurity were constantly apprehended and, as a result, feeling of the need for protection on the part of the state prevailed. The "stone-men" realized clearly that in the event of possible economic or foreign reversals, they being in reality escaped outlaws, would not be able to rely on the support of the government. All these considerations made the "stone-men" think acquiring regular citizenship. Another circumstance that forced them to take the decision was that skulking from the mining authorities became increasingly difficult year by year. As the Cabinet went on with developing and industrializing Western Altai lands, exploration parties that were coming in search of ore deposits would come near the "stone-men" settlements even more often, and also for silver and copper mines.

In 1790, eleven "stone-men" approached the camp of a prospecting expedition that was searching for ores in the vicinity of the Old Believers' settlements and declared that they were runaway Old Believers and wished to be granted Russian citizenship, that they were ready to pay taxes, help in developing the mining industry and in defending the area. The industrial authorities took on the role of the intermediary between the fugitives and the Russian government¹⁸. The return of the "stone-men" to Russian citizenship was confirmed by the decrees of Catherine II of September 15, 1791 and January 20, 1792. On June 25, 1792, four representatives from the South Altai free community were given by the local authorities the *ukase* of their "pardon"¹⁹. By then, the Old Believer settlements along the Upper Katun River totalled about 30 in number²⁰.

The lands mastered by the "stone-men" were secured for Russia and transferred to the general administration of the imperial Cabinet, which controlled the government lands of Altai without any financial, material or human cost to the government, or any diplomatic effort on the part of the state. Thus, thanks to the work of runaway dissenters, the region

became part of the Russia. For Russia, The Old Believers became reliable pivot in this geopolitically important part of the country. It was thanks to the Old Believer factor that the Russian government was able to make adjustments of the frontier with China, gaining important territorial concessions. That explains the historical fact that only the South Altai Old Believers enjoyed such rights and privileges which other dissenters or classes of taxable population could only dream of. The privileges granted to them were significant: they were made equal in rights with the local *yasak* populations: instead of a poll tax they paid the *yasak*, that is the tax paid with furs of wild animals, which was not any burden considering the abundance of fur beast in the forests, they were free from military drafts and the factory duty obligatory for the Russian peasants in Altai. Government decrees actually gave them freedom of conscience, and no religious restrictions, and freedom of entrepreneurial activities. In the period that followed, the intervention of the state in the life of the Old Believers' society of Altai was minimal. Granted considerable privileges, and in the conditions of absolute economic freedom, the Old Believers of Altai quickly reached high levels of social and economic development. The incorporation of South-West Altai into Russia accelerated greatly the process of settlement and economic development of the region. Under the decrees of the 1790s, "stone-men" were entitled to choose at will where to live. They left the hard for living and badly suited for economic activities southern spurs of the Katun ridge and moved to wide river valleys.

Thus, in 1791–1792 the Bukhtarma "stone-men" acquired Russian citizenship. However, one Old Believer family, that of Gavriila Bochkarev, nicknamed Bochkar, disagreed with this decision and left the Bukhtarma community taking refuge in a new place – at the mouth of the Argut, where it emptied into the Katun. Here, the Bochkarevs built everything necessary for life – residential and farm buildings and a mill – and started to plough the land, managing to hold out for several years. Then they were discovered by a merchant who informed the authorities about the fugitives. At the insistence of the Cabinet Administration, Bochkarev's group abandoned the remote and hard of access Argut and moved to the spacious Uimon Valley on the right bank of the Katun river. The founding

of the village of Verkh-Uimon dates to about 1796–1798. The Bochkarevs were forgiven by the 1798 manifesto of Tsar Paul I. Under the *Ukase* of 1798, the Uimon “stone-men”, just as those of the Bukhtarma in 1791, received the same taxation, social and religious privileges. Paul I’s government even sent them harrows and plows for cultivating the land²¹. The old Bukhtarma settlers – the Old Believer families of the Nagibins, Savateevs, Ognevs, Klepikovs, and others - started to move to the new village in the Uimon steppe. The process of resettling from Bukhtarma to the Upper Uimon went on well.

In the process of economic development of the new area, the Uimon Old Believers, like the Russian peasants in Altai, widely practiced the *zaimka* (individual farmstead) pattern of settlement, which allowed them to settle in an alien ethnic and cultural environment without harming the local population. At first, one or two peasant families would come and build a farm; if the choice proved lucky they were joined by others. The initial isolated farmstead would grow into a village, that in turn branched new offshoots. Many residents of the Old Believer settlements had, far in the mountains, at a distance of 5 to 20 kilometres or more *zaimkas* where they kept apiaries, hords of marals (Siberian wapiti deer) or cattle. From both the Upper and the Lower Uimon, and upstream the Katun tributaries, Old Believers’ families’ farmsteads started spreading, which gradually grew into new villages²². Over time, the Old Believers’ settlements and *zaimkas* became a center of attraction for other categories of Russian and the local settled population.

The *Raskolniks* were attracted to secluded places, of which there were a great many in the mountains, and where it was possible to put up sketes *startsi-skitniks* would come to live²³. The tradition of ascetic living in wilderness was quite popular in the mountainous parts of Altai, and the *startsi-skitniks* [or “wilderness-dwellers” (hermits); *startsy* is the plural form for the Russian “starets”, an experienced and wise spiritual guide or teacher; a *skitnik* being a person who lives in a skete] were able to live totally unmolested in their secluded hidden *zaimkas* for decades on end. The official documents witness the presence of the skete fashion of living on the Uimon throughout the 19th century. The relative independence of

the Old Believers in the mountainous part of Altai attracted dissenters from other parts. The Old Believer presence in the Uimon region and in the mountainous Altai in general proved attractive to their brethren from elsewhere in Russia. Old Believers of various persuasions began to settle in the lands along the middle and lower course of the Katun river.

The ecclesiastic authorities in Altai made efforts to stop the spread of the *Raskol*. In the second and third quarter of the 19th century, religious situation on the Uimon and other parts of mountainous Altai began to change perceptibly. Orthodox Christian Russian peasants and the baptized from other ethnic origins from various districts of the Tomsk province would penetrate into the Valley even more often. In 1826 they founded the village of Abai, and in 1829 the *inorodtsy* (non-Slavic populations) from the Shuya volost of the Kuznetsk district, having obtained permission from the administration, founded the village of Ust-Koksa.

In the Altai mountains, Old Believers had to exist in a multi-religious and multi-cultural environment. The successes of the Old Believers' settlement of the South-West Altai were accounted for by the stone-men's ability to accommodate and preserve themselves in all sorts of circumstances, to borrow and adapt traditions of other ethnic and cultural milieu. Many Old Believers mastered the Altaian language. They incorporated willingly into their society people of local ethnic groups: Altaians or Kazakhs. Agriculturalists at the outset, in the Altai mountains the Old Believers became expert hunters, formidable marksmen, and excellent riders. The "stone-men" proved to be receptive to cultural influences and the achievements of other peoples, and managed to create a mechanism for cooperation on a conflict-free basis with other ethnic and religious communities. At the same time, in that other-civilization and other-culture environment, the Old Believers preserved their own spiritual and everyday traditions.

The Uimon Old Believers, and other groups of the mountain Altai Old Believers, have long and famously been distinguished for their specific social and economic lifestyle and their specific mentality that has developed in the course of their long history. The economic life of the mountain Altai dissenters was rather varied. The Old Believers were able to create a highly

profitable commodity economy of diversified character that included their traditional occupations: farming, in which they demonstrated great diligence, cattle breeding, maral breeding, mountain beekeeping, as well as turned to profit such occupations as hunting, Siberian pine cones gathering, and other trades. Maral breeding and horse-breeding grew particularly flourishing. Some owners had up to 500 horses, 50 to 70 heads of cattle and 200 heads of small livestock. Another important occupation of the Old Believers' was mountain beekeeping. In the alpine meadows of the Uimon region, and in other locations of the Altai Mountains too, some of them kept up to 300 beehives.

Considerable profits were made from foreign trade. The most profitable was trade with the Chinese and the Mongols, who created stable demand for maral antler products. The immediate result of Russian-Chinese trade was creation of a new branch of the economy of mountain villages, maral wapiti breeding, which became the Old Believers' most profitable occupation²⁴. The Chinese trade, of long standing and mutually beneficial, left its mark on everyday culture and the appearance of the Old Believers populations of Altai. Thus, the Uimon Old Believers wore silk and cotton clothes of bright colors, purchased for themselves Chinese robes etc., ceramic dishes and porcelain, and wooden (varnished) objects gained stable popularity. *Raskolniki* lived in good, even elegant, houses that had a lot of light, thanks to the windows with paned glass in them. The mark of the peasant life in the south of Altai had remarkably high living standard. As the peasants felt no want, the general rule was long average lifetime. On the whole, in the pre-Soviet period of Russian history, of all the groups of population of Russian ethnic origin of the Asiatic part of Russia, the Old Believers of mountainous Altai were outstanding for their high level of economic activity.

The life and work of the south Altaian Old Believer-peasant were inseparable from nature and its rhythms. The ideals and notions of the Uimon Old Believers were in close connection with the conditions of everyday life, with those peculiarities of nature and climate of the Altai uplands that the results of their work depended on to a large extent and so did the quality of their life. The well-being of the head and all members

of the family, the nearest and other relatives, and of the whole community was dependent on the ability to coordinate and harmonize the complex whole of the economic activities with that of natural phenomena and reproduce it over and over again from generation to generation. In the Altai mountains, the Russian *Raskolniks* developed from scratch a completely new agricultural calendar to be fitted in the new natural environment²⁵. The Old Believers have always been unmistakable in choosing the best economic options that would take into account the conditions of climate and terrain, the availability of water, and the quality of soils to be used for agriculture, grazing, hay stacking etc. The Old Believers put rich natural resources and peculiarity of the mosaic pattern of the mountainous and taiga landscapes of Southern Altai to optimal use to create a diversified economy, including agriculture, cattle and maral breeding, mountain beekeeping, gathering Siberian pine nuts, hunting and other types of economic and economic-like activities.

The process of the economy thus evolved included selection of the most effective methods of nature management. Notwithstanding the abundance of natural wealth, the Old Believers created a system of cautious and careful, and most tolerant treatment of the nature: of the arable lands, meadows, hunting areas, of animal and plant life. The Dissenters were the first in that part of the country to introduce dispersed pattern of using natural resources. The manner of cultivating the soil, the observance of the rule of crop rotation, the oral agro-technical tradition and the customs that exist in the Old Believers' villages demonstrate caring and thoughtful attitude to the land, the fathers worked. The land preservation technologies created by the Old Believers did not destroy the natural fertility of the soil. Grazing, including use of distant pastures, was brought by the Uimon Old Believers to a high level of perfection. It was very logical that one of the industries that prospered in the area was breeding of high quality breeds of cattle and horses, and other animals. Many sectors of the Old Believers' mountain economy were waste-free and did not do the nature any harm. There was functioning in the Uimon society an unwritten code of rules governing hunting and fishing based on the data provided by long-time observations of the life of animals in forests and fish in the rivers,

of the conditions animal, plant, and other resources of the land. Personal observations were the primary source of data about the nature and climate of the land, and the transmission of that data from generation to generation was carried out through oral tradition. Alongside that, the Old Believers of Altai adopted some ideas and methods of use of natural resources from the indigenous residents – representatives of the nomadic and semi-nomadic cultures that were existent in the region.

The cult of nature was so important for the formation of the spirituality of the Old Believers of Southern Altai that it has up till nowadays remained part of their mentality. In the historical past, when choosing the location for a village, a *zaimka*, a farmstead, the *Raskolniks* took into consideration two principles: the aesthetic and the ethical ones. They would only choose a beautiful, “merry” as they put it, place, on the banks of a mountain river or lake, near flowering plants or a forest²⁶.

The need to struggle for survival and doing farming in extreme conditions of the taiga uplands, surrounded by rocky ridges with eternal glaciers and snowfields, compelled the *Raskolniks* who had settled in the region to everyday hard efforts and demanded the people to be strong, healthy, active, assiduous and persevering. In the period before the Revolution of 1917, scholars noted such qualities of the Uimonians as courage, fearlessness, independence, enterprise, zest for risks, and stressed that it was in the process of opposing the harsh natural conditions of the mountainous clime that these qualities were developed²⁷.

The traditional forms of economic organization of all Russian dissenters were family, community, and village. In South Altai, along with these traditional forms, such methods of social and economic organization as simple forms of cooperation – in the form of fishing “artels” and of family cooperatives – were of great importance. In addition, the Old Believers managed to create a model of local self-government which combined the paternalistic principle, based on the cult of the family and of the elders, with the strivings of individuals of active and inventive mind for independence and freedom of action. The *Raskolnik* communities of Altai grew into a sort of the Old Believer version of peasant democracy.

Survival and material well-being in the mountains of Southern Altai,

with its extreme climatic conditions, depended on the collective effort, mutual support and help. The acquisition of the uplands was carried out in groups: first by hunting artels or family clans, then by whole communities. In the nineteenth century, the community became the principal economic unit, and it was attached religious significance by the Old Believers of the persuasion of the *Bespopovtsi* (dissenters who denied priesthood: from colloquial Russian “pop” for “priest”). In absence of priests, the most respected old men – the *ustavstchik* (the person whose responsibility is to watch that the performance of due procedure is ensured, esp. that Church service goes according to books; derived of *ustav*, the Russian for “canon”, “code”, “regulations”) instructors – performed all religious functions. The whole community had to rely on their expertise, experience, and responsibility. The collective experience of the entire Old Believer society was employed in almost all spheres of life of the mountain villages. The *Raskolnik* peasants were in fact carriers of market relations, and they put the traditions of collectivist existence and religious outlook to successful use to evolve in the Altai mountains a small-bourgeois lifestyle, that was already in presence in early 19th century when rest of the country continued to live in a feudal- *krepostnik* fashion. In the early twentieth century, despite the spread on the Uimon of the habit of using hired labor, the Old Believers went on practising *pomotchi* (plural form for the noun *помощь*, the Russian for “aid”, “help”, or “assistance”): the villagers would come to help without asking for pay, the man would only entertain those who would turn up to pitch in to a meal. The Old Believers resorted to the help of the fellow villagers in doing big and important jobs, such as wapiti antlers cutting, building a large house, etc.²⁸.

Taking cover in the Altai mountains, the Old Believers preserved the spiritual traditions of the Muscovite Russia and kept them unchanged up to the early 20th century. The formation of regional peculiarities of the Altai Old Believers’ moral values fell upon till the turn of nineteenth century. The results of this creative process have constituted the most important part of South-Western Altai Dissenters’ spiritual life. Closely connected with other aspects of culture, moral values became the necessary basis of the world outlook and behavior of the Old Believers, became part of

everyday life and the actual foundation of their entire lifestyle. According to the moral ideals of Altai mountain Old Believers, it was absolutely necessary for everyone to be religious and to work. The absence of church hierarchy gave rise to active and conscious attitude towards religious issues, and the need to build life on true, in their opinion, religious foundations in new conditions made that interest lively and practical. Since the Old Believers' persuasion represents a type of the Russian Orthodox Christianity, its system of ethics is a type of Christian morality based on the biblical precepts common to all Christians, the Ten Commandments of the Old Testament and the commandments of the Sermon on the Mount²⁹.

The pivotal part in the system of spiritual and moral values of the *Raskol* in Altai belonged to viewing everyday work as the surest and most obvious way of self-assertion in earthly life and means of attaining spiritual salvation in the Kingdom Come. As a result, the formation of the Old Believers' spirituality had strong influence of labor asceticism (obedience and abstention from taking pleasure). The perception of life as of incessant toil, and the pursuit of material well-being brought about a specific system of values, among which industriousness, similar to a considerable degree to the Protestant ideal, was of primary importance. Southern Altai dissenters' communities affirmed the value of material well-being, frugality, pragmatism, condemned extravagance and ineptitude to work. The well-to-do Old Believers instilled into the young people respect for work, to the soil, to an assiduous peasant and contempt towards vagabonds, the lazy, the inept to work properly. In the Old Believers' society, individual initiative and enterprise were encouraged³⁰.

In contrast to the traditional Orthodox Christian morality that condemned the pursuit of wealth, the Old Believers' work and entrepreneurial code held acquisitiveness godly. However, wealth and material well-being for the Old Believers were not *fin en soi*, but were considered fruit of spiritual asceticism, which was the principle method of spiritual improvement. It is no accident, therefore, that work processes were endowed with religious, sacred character. Before starting any kind of work religious rites were performed; without fail all work began with prayer.

One of the characteristic features of Old Believers is their commitment to religious ritual, rising to the perception of all processes of life and work as some aggregate of sacred rites. As the spiritual and moral culture, with their symbolic language, not only determined the sacred aspect of the Old Believers' life, but also everyday and economic components of it, the Old Believers saw no differences between moral effort and physical toil, did not distinguish between ethical and economic activity, but rather tended to comprehend them as an organic whole ³¹.

Affluence and thrift, and competent housekeeping were associated with reverent attitude to work traditions and skills, to the ideal of frugality and the principle of keeping clean the house, one's clothes, and oneself. These are the "three whales" of the Old Believers' spiritual build. Diligence and enterprise became a solid spiritual basis for the Old Believers conduct, became part of ways and of everyday life. The Old Believer of Altai has always been self-confident and enterprising, and enjoyed reputation for self-reliant management of one's own self. In the Old Believers' houses, remarkable cleanliness reigned that would go with their attitude toward practical aesthetics. Sweeping the house would be done several times a day, the stoves and ovens would be given fresh whitening, the wooden surfaces – floors, benches, shelves, cabinets etc., if not covered with varnish or paint, were rubbed clean with river sand and water every Saturday.

The system of values of the Old Believers of the Bukhtarma and Uimon includes respectful attitude to older people and others, the principle of honor and duty, strict fulfillment of obligations. The two moral features: comradely support in misfortune and strictest, notwithstanding any circumstances, fulfillment of obligations manifested themselves graphically during the search for Belovodye, when the Old Believers in large groups, including women and children, covered vast expanses of Central Asia, and on "artel" hunting or fishing expeditions far in the mountains.

Of the moral standards of the Uimon *Raskolnik* peasants, mercy manifested itself most vividly in various forms: helping in tight circumstances, sympathy and helping the injured and the needy, care for the elderly, children, weak or ill relatives. The necessity to stand for their own religious beliefs in the alien cultural environment contributed to the

formation of exceptional flexibility of the Uimon Old Believers' mentality. All the pre-Soviet scholars would make special mention of the South Altai Old Believers' amazing hospitality to strangers and travelers, and their unfailing willingness to help anybody, in stark contrast to the behavior of other groups of the Old Believers in other regions of Western Siberia. Together with this, the passing travelers would note the Uimon Old Believers' selflessness, integrity, and affability³².

All travelers who visited the Altai mountains would observe that the local Old Believers are very religious and devote a lot of time to prayers and religious reading. It was almost up to the end of the 19th century that the Old Believers did not know any secular literature. The liturgical books and the Old Believers' origin that their ancestors had brought with them and preserved, repeated the ancient models. In the Old Believers' society, of highest esteem were those people who were well-read in the scriptures and were able to read and interpret religious texts from books of the old print. As late as in the twentieth century, they were very reluctant to let their children go to state schools. Nevertheless, the literacy rates among the Uimon population, not excluding the women, were high. As the Old Believers devoted considerable time to reading prayers, the Holy Scripture, the patristic literature, everyone knew reading and writing. The ancient bookish knowledge has been preserved as one of the principle values of Old Believer society, and the Old Believer book has been the main spiritual and moral pivot for the task of preservation of the ancient Faith and passing it over to new generations. All the Old Believers' houses had a lot of ancient icons in them, that were cast of brass³³.

In accordance with the Dissenters' eschatological views, the so-called "cup doctrine" evolved that prohibited contacts with the "worldly" (the "pagan"), i.e., the people of "Antichrist's world": shaking hands, touching things that belonged to the "worldly", eating from their dishes or drinking from their cups, buying food from them, going to their bathhouses, canteens, etc. were banned.

Thus, the Old Believers, in trying to keep their "ancient piety", guarded themselves from all that was worldly. That is why the Old Believers of the mountainous Altai in the 19th – early 20th century rejected,

and the people of the older generation go on rejecting even nowadays, much of the “worldly” life. Before the Soviet period, they never went to the parties of the “worldly” nor appeared in their houses as guests, though they themselves would receive guests, never bought food at stores or shops nor ate the “worldly”’s food, because they believed that it was prepared by the Satan’s hands, and would not use other people’s cups or dishes. In their houses they kept special cups and dishes for use by the “worldly” guests, after their visits, the house saw thorough washing of the floors and cleaning of the furnishings. Samovar was called by the Old Believers “snake’s mouth”; they would not use it in their own everyday life, but kept one for “worldly” visitors.

Food taboos included bans to eat the meat of animals with cloven hooves (e.g. horse meat), and hares and pigeons. The Old Believers called the potato a “devil’s” or “Antichrist’s apple”, so they did not have cultivation of potatoes in their households. As late as in the 1930s, there were mountainous Altai Old Believers who had never seen apples or pears, did not drink tea, for it came from the Chinese, who worshiped the dragon (the “Serpent”), or vodka, did not smoke tobacco, which they among themselves considered “devil’s poison”, calling it also the “root of affliction”. Coffee, too, was under a ban. They would never cut bread, but would break it with the hands.

Special attitude has been preserved among the Old Believers towards water and fire. In the period in the late 17th century through the earlier half of the 18th century, when they were regarded outlawed runaways, to the forcible return to the “ Antichrist’s world”, they preferred death in a fire, proclaiming that method of resistance “fire sacrament”. As for water, the Old Believers preserved the notions of the old Slavic tradition in respect of stagnant and open water, in which they believed evil spirits lived. Such ideas conditioned some rules of using water. Thus, water in the house must never be left open: water vessels were kept covered with a lid or at least two chips of firewood were placed on top in the form of a cross. Clothes when washed were only rinsed in clean and running water (in a river), water for drinking or household needs was scooped upstream only – and only downstream for medical purposes. The Old Believers used

water resources caringly, and they had perfect knowledge of all the salubrious springs in the area. Household waste would never be dumped into rivers or streams, and stones would never be thrown into water, and the banks and riverbeds would be carefully cleaned. For irrigation, ditches would be dug and maintained in good condition.

Baptismal and burial rites had peculiar features of their own. Both were carried out by the *ustavstchik* instructors. Babies were baptised in the freezingly cold water of mountain rivers, such baptism being considered the second birth. A person would prepare for oneself, while one was still alive, one's own coffin – made of a whole tree trunk and without a single nail.

The absence of church organization or priests in the Old Believers' communities caused spread of all sorts of superstitions, including using charms, which among the Uimon dissenters were called "whispers," because they were to be uttered in a very low voice to the person to whom the charm was intended. There existed "whispers" for all sorts of occasions: from fear, from jinx (evil eye), for protection of bees or livestock, and for good harvest. As the Old Believers avoided official medicine and cases of disease, splinters in hands or feet, hernia, snake bites etc. were treated by uttering charms. Being rather superstitious, the Old Believers tended to explain things incomprehensible to them in their own peculiar manner. For instance, when bees perished, it was explained by malignant dew that fell on the bees and the flowers. The Old Believers told a story of a large yellow insect, the "princeling", that was alleged to protect the bees and bring good luck onto the apiary. The incantation of a charm was employed in order to prevent the evil eye, and the top of the fence surrounding on apiary was crowned with the skull of a horse³⁴.

At the turn of the 19th century, legends began to appear among the Old Believers of Altai about the land of Belovodye, a rich and free peasant paradise concealed behind impassable mountains, where "God the Lord scattered with a generous hand stores of food and all things good for everyone to enjoy freely" and where the true Orthodox Christian ("Old-Fatherly") faith was being preserved. The Belovodye legends did not start to appear earlier than the year 1791 AD. The earliest official mentioning

Belovodye dates from the year 1807³⁵. At the end of the 18th century, the name Belovodye began to be attached to the natural resources rich Upper-Katun territory that was being taken over by the free communities of the “stone-men”. The fact that the *Raskolniks* living there had preserved the pre-Petrine life ways, huge amounts of literature of ancient print, of old icons, and ancient household items also fueled interest in that region. When the territory of Altai was incorporated in the Russian state, peasant traditions moved Belovodye over to climes lying beyond Russia³⁶.

In the emergence of the Belovodye legends, important part was played by two factors that came into play in the same period as the first rumors of the imagined country. One was the emergence in the 18th century of the “Begunski talk”, a sect of *beguni* that was just another offshoot of the Old Believer movement. (*Beguni*, the Russian for “runners” or “runaways”, “fugitives” were also called *stranniki*, which is the Russian for “pilgrims”). Teachings of the “runners”, most implacable opponents of the Russian Orthodox Church, were, again, based on the expectation of an imminent “end of the world.” The *Beguni* persuasion was one of the most radical among all the Old Believers’ sects. According to their view, leaving for unpopulated places was the only way to spiritual salvation. Any relations with the ordinary Orthodox Christians were considered spiritual death. They urged the “true” Christians, that is the Old Believers, to flee from the Antichrist and run to deserted places³⁷. In the territory of Altai the first “runners” appeared at the end of the 18th century. They were those who actively distributed the legend of Belovodye. The *Beguni* numbers are extremely hard to be estimated, as they kept their itinerary and staging posts secret not only from the authorities, but from their fellow-Old Believers too. Those who shared their views, but did not feel prepared to join them were called “the hospitable”. The latter were engaged in harboring runaway Old Believers. They arranged crates for concealing wandering *Beguni* and dens under their houses with secret entrances and underground exits, which led to places in the forest beyond the village³⁸. The other two factors that interplayed with the spread of the Belovodye legends, was that of rumors marching across Russia about the economic successes of the “stone-men” and their free life beyond the impregnable

mountains which agitated the minds of the people with visions of free living in the distant Altai mountains³⁹.

The authorities' repressions growing sterner under Tsar Nicholas I contributed to the upsurge of the Belovodye movement. "Pilgrims" haunted Altai more frequently than ever and there was an increase of the number of secret sketes, the Belovodye legends' circulation grew wider, and all that led to more escapes of Altai Old Believers across the frontier. In the second quarter of the 19th century "suspicious individuals" started to appear in the southwestern part of the Altai mountains. They were proponents of the *Raskol*, teachers of *Bespopovtsi* (priestless) persuasions, agitating in favor of the Dissent. They roamed the mountains exhorting prophecies about "the last times". Under their influence, the local Old Believers began to talk more often of the coming of the Antichrist. The Old Believer peasants of Altai seriously believed that it was necessary to escape to an inaccessible country of Belovodye, where the true Orthodox Christian faith and the old Orthodox episcopacy and priests had survived, where there were a lot of churches and "carefree" living without the need to pay taxes and duties, and absolute economic "freedom". The "runners" would make for themselves secret "route sheets", a sort of guide-leaves that charted the route from their places of residence to Belovodye. Such guides were known as "travelers". Originating in different places of the Russian empire, the "travelers" led to the country Belovodye through Altai. The last destination on the Russian territory in the "travelers", in their different variants, was the Uimon. The further route to Belovodye was only known to the Uimon "hospitables".

The Belovodye legends rather quickly took root among the Altai Old Believers. Under their influence, the local Old Believer population joined in the search for the mythical country. Active Belovodye-searching got wide spread from the second quarter of the 19th century. Throughout the 19th century and as late as the beginning of the twentieth century, the Uimon Old Believers' settlements were the organizational centers for the escape of Russian people to China⁴⁰. It is little wonder that in the first half of the 19th century, the supervisor of Kolyvano-Voskresensk factories suggested in his report to the Minister of Interior that the Uimon "stone-

men” be evicted beyond the bounds of the Tomsk province. In the eyes of the civil and ecclesiastic authorities, the Uimon was the “bottom of the Siberian Raskol.” The years 1825 – 1826 saw a major escape across the Chinese frontier, the Old Believers then nearly died of starvation in the strange mountains. In 1828, a new escape to Belovodye took place, carefully prepared, with the route carefully adjusted by the route sheets⁴¹. A large group of Old Believers attempted crossing the border in 1840. There were escapes to Belovodye in the years of 1858, 1861, and then in 1869⁴². As is clearly seen, the interests of faith always prevailed over worldly considerations. The last group of the Old Believers of Altai to leave for abroad did so after the revolution of 1917 and during the Civil War.

Thus, the Old Believers are part of the Russian population professing Orthodox Christianity in the forms developed before the middle of the 17th century. Very early in history, the south-western part of Altai – the Uimon territory – became one of the areas of compact settlement of Old Believers. The remoteness from the center of the country, the interest of the state in the loyalty of the Old Believers, the opportunity for them to take refuge across the Chinese border were important factors in the history of the Altai Dissenters. Their cultural and historical, economic, and social peculiarities and traditions ensured independent development of the economy and culture of the Old Believers of Southern Altai. Altai Old Believers made a solid contribution to the formation of the Russian culture of Siberia.

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SACRALIZATION OF ALTAI SPACE BY OLD BELIEVERS

I. V. KUPRIYANOVA

ABSTRACT

This article discusses the role and significance of pre-Christian components of the Old Believer culture in the process of colonization of Altai, and the formation of a specific cultural landscape. Updating the archaic strata of cultural memory, the Old Believers formed the spiritual basis of the colonization process. The basis of this structure was a tradition accumulating rational experience in the form of a set of stable values, ideas and establishments that can be considered as an important adaptive resource that helps to solve the problems of economic and cultural development of uninhabited areas. This circumstance explains the particular saturation with pre-Christian symbols and rituals of the Old Believer culture in general and the culture of the Old Believers of Altai in particular. The sacralization of its individual components was an inevitable consequence of the exceptional life circumstances in which the Old Believers were subjected to persecution and forced to migrate to the outskirts of Russia.

Keywords: archetypes, church schism, Old Believers, Altai colonization, sacralization of culture.

The split of the Russian Orthodox Church is not only the central event of the 17th century, but also one of the turning points in the history of Russia. The consequences of this tremendous turning point in its political, socio-economic and religious-cultural life continued to affect for over two centuries. They played an important role in the revolutionary events of early 20th century.

At different times, various causes of the split were called: church, political, cultural, etc., but it would be correct to perceive them in a complex. From mid-17th century, Russia began to develop as an empire. In this process, religion played a special, bonding role. During this period,

the state of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth disintegrated, which included the territories of modern Poland, Lithuania, Ukraine and Belarus. The problem of the joining of its eastern parts — territories with a predominantly Christian-Orthodox population — was growing. However, Russian Orthodoxy in these historical conditions was not suitable for the role of a consolidating ideology due to its national specificity.

Imposing it on other Orthodox peoples could be regarded by them as an infringement of their national identity and lead to their resistance, which would become a serious obstacle to solving the problems of state building. It was required to offer the unified nations a universal version of Orthodoxy, devoid of national features, as a model equally acceptable to all. Such a version could only be the Greek version - the Orthodoxy of Byzantium, which the Eastern European countries adopted, each in its own time. The paradox was that in the 17th century Byzantium as a state no longer existed: it fell under the blows of the Ottoman Turks in 1453. But its church organization was preserved: the Patriarchate of Constantinople continued to exist, albeit in an incomparably impoverished state, and its hierarchy tried, no matter what, to maintain primacy in the Orthodox world. This explains the negative role that the leaders of the Greek church played in the tragic events of the Russian schism.

Thus, the reform of the regulations of Russian Church took the form of adjustment to alien standards. At the same time, the Orthodoxy of a country that had already suffered a geopolitical defeat was taken as a model. This circumstance dealt a blow to the national pride of Russian people who are accustomed to consider themselves the only guardians of true piety. Being caused by a whole complex of reasons, the schism proceeded very painfully for Russian society. A significant part of it did not recognize church reform, considering it a malicious fall into heresy, and continued to perform old rites, even after their direct prohibition. This part of society received the names of “schismatics” and “Old Believers.”

The negative imprint on the course of the reform left such personal traits of the main reformer - Patriarch Nikon as excessive lust for power, intolerance and cruelty. Nikon and Tsar Alexei Mikhailovich, who was

under his influence, mercilessly suppressed the resistance of the “white” clergy and the mass of believers who followed it: the highest hierarchs were pacified quite easily. The history of the formation of Old Believers abounds with episodes of extremely brutal punishment of the religious opposition and its leaders, performed by the Tsar and the Patriarch. Repressions hardened the people; the Old Believers began to absorb all new followers, for one reason or another who were dissatisfied with the authorities.

By early 18th century, the Old Believer movement had strengthened and multiplied, gained a conscious, clearly articulated ideology. At the same time, its structure became more complicated. Two of its main movements have been identified: accepting the church hierarchy - *popovocy*, and abandoning it due to the lack of a true clergy - *bespopovcy*. Each of these areas was divided into several faiths, more and more distant from each other in dogmatic and ceremonial issues. Separations occurred periodically within the confessions, new movements formed. Such dogmatic fragmentation did not weaken the Old Believers; on the contrary wide opportunities were created for religious freedom of thought and theological creativity.

The spiritual forces of the people, suppressed by the state, turned to other tasks, one of which was the colonization of the vast outskirts of the country. The most important strategic direction of internal migration for the Old Believers was Siberia. They were attracted here by the abundance of desert spaces, inaccessible to secular and church authorities. Under these conditions, they could realize their ideal of secluded life and unrestrained religious freedom.

Coming to new lands, completely uninhabited not only by the Russian, but also by the indigenous population, the Old Believers began their active cultural and economic development, transforming them into the blossoming outskirts of the Russian world. In doing so, small group of Old Believers in the shortest possible time colonized significant territories, which were very valuable in all respects. So, for example, they colonized the border land areas of the Siberian southwest, which are part of modern Altai territory and Altai Republic of Russian Federation, as well as East

Kazakhstan region of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

At the same time, which they did not even think about at all, the Old Believers formed new sections of the Russian border - the so-called "imperial perimeter". Old Believer colonization constantly moved farther south, east, and southeast. In search of free land, the Old Believers moved to new areas of the border, inhabited and developed them, securing them as part of the Russian empire. In some cases, they penetrated the Chinese border and, with the mere fact of their presence and successful management, pushed the Russian-Chinese border, expanding the territory of Russia. Thus, they carried out the most important mission of national importance.

No less useful for the interests of the Russian state is the Old Believer colonization of the inner regions of Altai - the economic development of uninhabited places, the foundation of new localities, secret shelters, squattings, which eventually grew into large villages and settlements. An important incentive in the development of Altai Old Believers was a search by them for their living the most deaf, secluded places; as a result, they often chose for colonization alpine or other natural areas difficult for economic activity. Russian industrialists and farmers usually went around these territories, while the Old Believers willingly and quickly settled down there. Their development of extreme territories was successful, despite the harsh climatic conditions, which often constituted direct threat to human life and health.

The constant migrations of the Altai Old Believers showed their tendency to mobility, even to vagrancy. It was sometimes irrational, prompting them to leave a relatively favorable and well-maintained living environment and embark on the search for even more attractive living conditions. Sporadic searches for Belovodye can also be considered as a manifestation of a tendency to mobility and boldness.

As is known, this "moved the Russian colonization to the Chinese borders" and further "beyond the Chinese border"¹. In this direction, routes of enormous length ran in the 19th century. The participants of these search groups walked the most difficult mountain trails, passing "the heights of the mountains"; crossed the desert, getting deeper inside China,

reaching the shores of Lob Nor; often perished, "leaving behind themselves legends"².

One such expedition, described by local historian A.N. Beloslyudov, took place in the 1860s. Belovodye - searches managed to get to Urumqi and, possibly, Turpan of the modern Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region of China. The complexity of the terrain of the intersected spaces, vast distances and lack of resources did not allow the groups of Belovodye - searches to reach the areas suitable for colonization. In addition, a constant return to the idea of migration to the territory of Chinese northwest speaks of its attraction to the Altai Old Believers, of their relentless tendency to resettle in the Altai mountains or the desert steppes of Asia. It was based on the desire to forever abandon the persecution of the state and the Russian Orthodox "dominant" church.

It's known, that the main content of the colonization process is the impact of human communities on nature. Its purpose is to create a comfortable environment for humans. Thus, during the economic and cultural transformation of a certain natural-territorial complex, settlements are founded, lands are divided, economic technologies are adapted. Taking into account local landscape features, the experience inherent in the colonizing community is realized. As a result of these focused efforts, a cultural landscape is formed, which is understood as "a joint work of man and nature, which is a complex system of material and spiritual values that have a high degree of environmental, historical, and cultural informational content"³. Each human community, united by ethnic, social, religious or other grounds, creates its own unique cultural landscape. Its specific components are the attributes inherent in the community - resettlement and household systems, language and spiritual culture, formed during the transformation of nature⁴.

Thus, it can be argued that the fundamental factor in the formation of the cultural landscape and at the same time its leading component is not so much material content as a spiritual basis. The leading place in it is occupied by a complex of religious, ethical, moral values that determine the direction of landscape-forming processes. Relying on culture, the community masters change the space of its habitat, transform it from

wild and uninhabited into well-organized and orderly. The community forms the cultural landscape that it preserves and translates “in time and space”⁵.

Based on this, the original culture of Old Believers can be considered as the main colonization resource and a key factor in the formation of the corresponding cultural landscape. Reliance on its fundamental components — the religious and cultural tradition and moral and ethical principles — allowed the small communities of Old Believers to make significant contribution to the initial colonization of Siberia.

In the cultural originality of Old Believers, the key element is the religious tradition, which made it a special community inside the Russian people. It should be remembered that the Old Believers did not create any new religious culture, but only preserved the elements of Russian-Orthodox culture of the pre-schism period, which were lost after the church reform of the 17th century. Another significant component of the Old Believer culture is the traditional everyday culture. Both these components of the Old Believer culture inevitably underwent certain transformation during the colonization of Siberia. Here the Old Believers found not only refuge from religious persecution, but also the opportunity to build their lives in accordance with the religious worldview and moral principles they profess.

Most clearly, these tendencies are visible in the attitude of the Old Believers to the relics of paganism. So, for example, the traditional festive service was filled with rituals of fertility and amulet magic, riotous amusements, indicating their obvious pre-Christian origin. The nature of these holiday entertainments clearly contradicted the Christian interpretation of holidays and the norms of canon law. The cultural memory of Old Believers turned to archaic experience. There was mobilization of any, including psychological technologies that seemed effective for the interests of colonization adaptation. In such circumstances, it seemed reasonable to use spellcasting practices; it seemed permissible to use elements of non-Christian ritualism. Folklore, developed in old times to service labor processes, could be considered the only, albeit irrational, resource that contributed to agricultural work in an unusually harsh climate. The same applies to magic, which is considered incompatible with

the Christian faith, but it has been and remains to this day practically inseparable from peasant life⁶.

Thus, in the process of colonization, a specific situation was formed in which the pagan cultural tradition was actualized and used by the Old Believers of Altai as an adaptation resource. It looks paradoxical only at first glance: tradition here does not supplant Christianity, but coexists with it, being used for purely pragmatic purposes. This is interpreted as a phenomenon of the continuation, or even regeneration, of the tradition of pagan behavior under special conditions, since the memory of the cultural experience of paganism was included in Old Russian Christianity⁷. It was this religious and cultural layer in its main components that the Old Believers inherited and reproduced.

In favor of this statement is the fact that elements of traditional archaic were present among the Old Believers both in everyday life and in the sphere of worship of the Christian cult, filling the living space with sacred meaning. The specificity of the religious practice of the Old Believers, especially of the *bespopovcy*, made it possible, if necessary, to perform ritual actions in the dwellings. In doing so, the “red corner” — the right front corner of the hut — was transformed into ritual space with the help of appropriate artifacts: holy books, crosses, icons, etc.

This organization of worship was and remains natural and organic for the Old Believers. They treated the transformed housing space as sacred, and behaved in it accordingly. The *Bozhnitsa* (or “red corner”) was perceived by them as an altar, a dining table with books and icons spread out on a towel - like a lectern. Men and women stood, as in a temple or a prayer house, the first on the right, the second on the left of the head of the ritual.

In pre-Christian terms, dwelling is a microcosm, a small model of a large world in which a person feels protected from hostile forces of nature. The sacralization of the “red corner” also has a pre-Christian connotation: in the traditional system of ritual and mythological representations, the red (“front”, “divine”) corner was the most valuable and honorable part of the house, to which other elements of the dwelling were oriented. In the pagan tradition, the red corner played an important role in the pre-

Christian cult and it was the place of worship, associated with the most significant moments in a person's life - birth, wedding and funeral.

An important role in these rituals was given to the table, which in traditional representations was associated with the throne, the altar of the church, which required the corresponding respect to be shown to it. The customs are well known that forbade raising one's voice while sitting at a table, putting elbows on it, eating bread, cutting bread, etc.⁸ It can be seen that the place of the "red corner" in the symbolic structure of the East Slavic peasant dwelling did not contradict the role of the altar assigned to it. On the contrary: in both interpretations it remained central, and at the corresponding moments - the sacred part of the house. Thus, the Old Believer culture developed within the boundaries of the dwelling as a small "world", on the basis of pre-Christian tradition, periodically flowing into the sphere of the Orthodox ritual.

The sacralization of a house space for the needs of Christian worship by the Old Believers was carried out not only with the help of liturgical objects, such as icons, crucifixes, books, but also artifacts of traditional everyday culture with a symbolic connotation. Of these, first place is a towel and a belt. Both these items come from deep pre-Christian ancientness. For all their inextricable genetic connection with everyday culture, they became entrenched in the religious culture. The towel served, and continues to serve until now, to frame the house prayer place - the *Bozhnitsa*. In the past, special worship towels were made with embroidered symbols, such as a temple, a cross, a sacred text. More recently, any embroidered towels were used for these purposes. An embroidered ornament can include a "tree of life" motif, and even more ancient solar rhombic, woven or embroidered patterns. The significance of the woven belt in the Old Believer religious culture lies in the fact that it is a necessary element of the rites of baptism and marriage, acting in them as a talisman. In addition, the belt was important as an essential component of the prayer costume.

It can be seen that the religious culture of Old Believers interpreted in its own way many, symbolically significant artifacts of the pre-Christian tradition. Moreover: these artefacts performed for it a culturally

differentiating function, allowing Old Believers to stand out and be different from “aliens”.

The cult of purity, interpreted both in the literal and figurative sense, occupied an important place in the ideas of the Old Believers of Altai. The direct understanding of cleanliness meant the unconditional personal hygiene and home hygiene. The exemplary order in the houses of Old Believers was repeatedly recorded by observers: the cleanliness of wooden surfaces, a bleached stove, neat interior textiles. Under no circumstances did the Old Believers let cattle, even young animals, enter into the hut, as representatives of other ethno-cultural groups acted to protect it from the winter cold.

The concept of purity also had a different meaning, denoting the purity of space from the polluting presence of “aliens” or “laymen”, that is, people of a different faith, perceived as absolute heretics. As a rule, after the departure of such guests, the Old Believers tried to restore the “cleanliness” they had violated: they wiped the door knobs aliens took on and the benches they sat on with rags soaked in kerosene. For the same purpose, they treated aliens from special, so-called “laymen” dishes. In this way, they circumvented the ban on a joint meal with the Gentiles. At the same time, they themselves used personal dishes, which they did not give to anyone. With the same dishes, they went to visit the “laymen”. The custom of eating from personal utensils was called “keep the cup.”

It should be noted that these ideas about the physical and moral purity, existed inseparably in the minds of the Old Believers. Both of them were equally a necessary condition for observing the purity of the Christian faith. For the Old Believers, whose self-identification was based on the conviction of their high mission as guardians of true righteousness, the problem of the purity of faith was especially urgent. In this belief, which was reproduced from generation to generation, they drew spiritual strength to confront hostile forces and overcome everyday difficulties.

The theme of purity in a special way has a motive of water. This is not to say that the Old Believers took this as a form of a cult. Also, water is invariably present in the most important customs and rituals, ritual ablutions and witchcraft. Water was perceived as a powerful means of

achieving spiritual and physical purity. So, for example, in their quest for “cleanliness”, the Old Believers dug up separate wells for themselves, from which they did not allow “aliens” to take water. When living together in the same village with the Gentiles, they built their separate areas, certainly higher up the river in order to use clean, not “desecrated” by aliens’ water.

In some ethno-cultural Old Believer groups, for example, Old Believers of the Uimon Valley, running river or spring water was valued higher than well water. They used the well water for laundering, washing dishes and dwellings, and the river water for drinking and cooking. In summer, children were baptized directly in the river, and in winter, in a special font, which was filled with heated river water. Adults were baptized in the river at any time of the year. Water from the first bathing of newborns, as well as from washing the dead, was given a sacred meaning, so it was poured outside of a house under a red corner. The rites of the Epiphany bathing in the ice-hole, the girl’s fortune-telling on wreaths during the celebration of the Trinity, were associated with river water.

It can be noted that in Altai, especially in its foothill, mid-mountain and high-mountain parts, the idea of sacredness of running water acquired new meanings. As is known, mountain Altai is an area with a dense river network, high water content, abundance of mineral springs, flowing lakes. Water resources here are of glacial origin and have rocky beds, therefore they are distinguished by high purity and transparency. Purity - “whiteness-belizna” of water is reflected in the name of many small rivers of Altai: Belaya, Belokurikha, Belaya Myyuta, Belaya Berel, as well as in Turkic hydronyms with the prefix *Ak* (white): Akkem, Akkol, Akalakh, Akbulak, Akkay, Akkarasu, Actel, Aktur, Akaira, etc.

Based on the foregoing, we can conclude that in the basis of the spiritual foundation of Old Believers, used in the process of developing new lands lay an original old Believer culture, which was an alloy of inter-dependent and inter-related national, house holding and religious norms in their pre-schism interpretation. The effectiveness of this cultural form as an instrument of colonization was dictated, first of all, by its support of tradition as a category that is identical to the concept of order, accumulating rational experience in the form of a set of stable values,

ideas and regulations. In Altai, the Old Believer culture, genetically related to the Russian medieval culture of the pre-schism period, activated and consolidated the components that best corresponded to the tasks of survival and adaptation in close connection with the natural environment. The most important cultural resource here was the pre-Christian heritage, reflected in the Old Russian Orthodox tradition, which had the Old Believers as the successors and continuers. The formation of the sacred landscape by the Old Believers as a whole can be considered as the highest level of colonization work, its main ideological dominant.

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ALTAI IN THE CREATION OF N.K. ROERICH

IRINA A. ZHERNOSENKO

ABSTRACT

The article presents the author's many years of research on the search for the works of N.K. Roerich associated with Altai. This work managed to find and clarify catalog information about 48 paintings by the artist related to the period of his stay in Altai, and to single them out into an independent "Altai" cycle. The materials collected by the author of the article during two expeditions, also played an important role in identifying Altai landscapes with the artist's works.

Key words: Altai, Belukha, Belovodye, Shambala, Buddhism, Burkhanism, Chude.

N.K. Roerich carried out his Trans-Himalayan expedition from 1923 to 1928 to do research on "the cradle of the nations" in archeological, geological, natural-science, historical, ethnographical and cultural aspects. The main task of the expedition was to prove the origins of Eurasian culture and their roots in Central Asia. The expedition's discoveries were collected in thousands of exhibits. During the same period, nearly five hundred paintings and sketches were made by the artist.

Research of modern natural scientists proves that some Earth territories are not only "clear", reserved places, but condense all performances of geo, bio and spiritual genesis. As Altaic philosopher M.Y. Shishin confirms: "Their role is...to accumulate and transmutate energies, be a kind of membrane in exchange of energies by line Earth – Space"¹. And one of these membranes or "astral-mental lenses" is Altai.

That Altai was important for Roerich is borne out by the fact that the researcher diverged from the main route, rather far towards Altai during

his Trans-Himalayan expedition. In order to refine Roerich's routes in Altai and identification of Altaic landscapes with the artist's creations he embarked upon two expeditions to the foot of Belukha: in July-August 1995 along the valley of the Ak-Kem river to the northern foot of Belukha and in July-August 1996 along the valley of the Kucherly river through the Eastern Kapchalskiy Range to the heads of Katun by the southern side of Belukha.

This author managed to trace the route of N.K. Roerich along Altai thoroughly and plot it on the map. The maximum number of questions in Roerich's study are the routes from Verkhniy Uymon depthward Altai. There were no attempts of refining the routes data in any researches of N.K. Roerich heritage². Roerich stayed in Altai for about a month – from July 28 till August 26 in 1926. He spent 12 days in Verkhniy Uymon. What attracted the artist and traveller in these places? Why did he plan to come back here and continue researches? Why do we see Belukha again in his last painting, which was unfinished in easel, because of the artist's death during his work?

“White Mountain”, Belukha – is the magnet which attracts thoughts of Siberian and Eastern nations. It's not only the highest peak of “the Silver mountains” – 4,506 metres. Many legends and predictions are connected with it. N.K and E.I. Roerich collected these legends, wrote down, correlated with the Teacher's instructions, which they got earlier. Elena Ivanovna Roerich records in her diary of 1926:

“1. VII. ... Take into considerations current doings. I guess, that we must go to Altai now – on the seventeenth...

17. VIII. Remember about the seventeenth, defining in Moscow. We saw Belukha today and the city valley...”³.

Here, in Altai the Roerichs discovered conditions for further evolutionary planet development: “Altai is not only the pearl of Siberia, but the pearl of Asia as well. The great future is planned beforehand to this wonderful point of concentration. The valley between Uymon and Katanda will be the place of a big center”⁴.

In today's history along with other points of view, Altaic-centrist culture conception exists. In its basis lies the confirmation that Altai is a

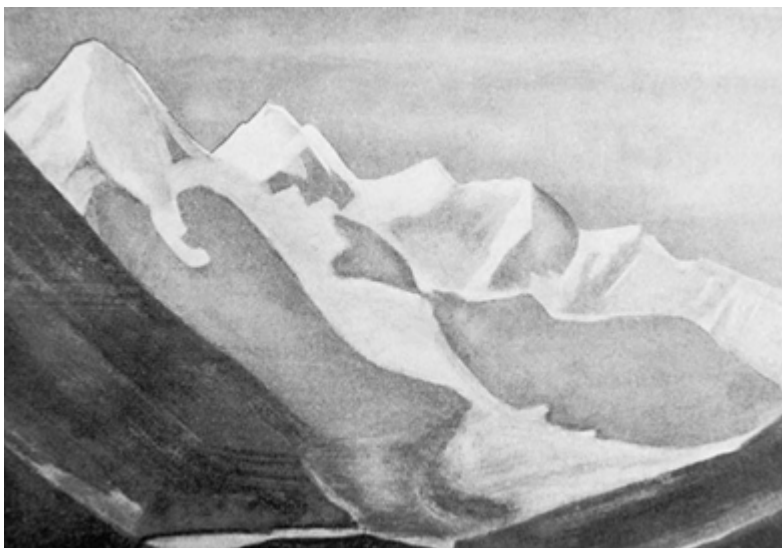


FIG. 1. N.K. ROERICH. *BELUKHA*, SKETCH (1926),
CARDBOARD, TEMPERA. 22.9 X 29.2 CM (USA)

kind of “melting pot”. The tribes and nations, moving by the avalanche of The Great transmigration and later forming modern Europe and Asian nations and states melted in it. Roerich was one of the first to express this thought: “Altai is the unopened treasury in pre-historic, as well is in historical approaches”⁵. The Indian Scientist V.R. Rishi, searching the initial birth place of Aryans, found it out in Altai. He confirms that, “the birth place of Aryans is Meru mountain or Sumeru Parbata how it is mentioned in some Purans and Mahabharata..., that Meru in Puranas – neither more nor less than Altaic mountains in Central Asia..., that the main whereabouts of the Creator God, Brahma, was in Meru itself”⁶.

N.K. Roerich writes in one of his letters to V. Bulgakov: “When you visited our Center in Paris, you probably saw my *etude “Belukha”*. There were three etudes of wonderful Aziyskiy peaks: Kanchendjunga, Belukha and Elbrus...”⁷.

The Paris etude projects Belukha from southern slope. (Fig. 1) The mountain by itself has more than one peak, overall system so-called “crown”, that’s why entirely new, each time unique view is formed from different view points. “For seeing it (Belukha – I.Zh.) in this turn, L.R. Tcesyulevith writes, - it would be necessary to cross the Katun Range

from north to south. There are several ranges in this direction but according to peasants' memories Atamanov led Nicolay Konstantinovich to the south part of Belukha along the range on the cold white. Definitely from the south, Belukha is opened in all its entirety and greatness...The "Belukha" painting is painted in sounding light tones. Western and eastern peaks are clearly visible, the Gebler Glacier is distinctively shown in the foreground, snowy Razdelniy Ridge crossing the Katun and Berelskiy glaciers behind the Gebler Glacier"⁸.

L.R. Tsesyulevich confirms, that N.K. Roerich painted Belukha – "from the West, from the Kholodnyi Pass, on the Katun Range" or its another name "Studyonyibelok", "Studyonyi Range" (but Kholodnyibelok is situated on the North-West towards Belukha -I.J.);

- from the North, up to the Terektynskiy Range near Tyungur;
- from the South, by the heads of Katun;
- and also "went to the foot of Belukha from its Northern side, along the Kucherly River"⁹.



FIG. 2. N.K. ROERICH. TESTAMENTS OF THE TEACHER (1927), BOARD, TEMPERA, 36.8 x 77.5. (USA, NEW YORK, GYRO COLLECTION)

There are no doubts about the possibility of etude or painting existence, which shows Belukha from the north-west, himself because the artist wrote: "Belukha, which is whispered even by deserts, itself is seen

the best from the Studyonyi Range”¹⁰. Some specialists suppose, that this view is exactly depicted in the picture *The Precepts of the Teacher*(1927) (Fig. 2). The impressions, getting in Altai, continue to provide the artist’s creation till his last day. The phenomenal memory of Roerich is impressive, it allowed him to paint favourite plots after years and decades with the same authenticity and heightened emotion.

With the same plot in 1931 *The Order of the Teacher* was painted and also the last painting, work on which was discontinued by his death. “The last Roerich picture, remaining on easel uncompleted, without latest detailing and dabs, also is devoted to Altai. In light clear blue silhouette of white mountain we see the outlines of “Altai mistress” – Belukha, it looks like white three-pronged crown. On the left is Delone peak, then pyramidal Eastern and Western peaks, blue ribbon of the river leads along the gorge to Belukha. Call to Altai, call to the peaks, call to Motherland – that is the sense of this uncompleted canvas... ”¹¹.



FIG. 3. *BELUKHA. VIEW FROM THE SOUTH.* (PHOTO BY V.V. SAPOZHNIKOV, 1897)

This author takes the liberty to confirm that *the famous etude of N.K. Roerich, safe in Paris, isn't painted live but most likely from photography.* (Fig. 3) In one of his observations, the artist refers to the evidence of V.V. Sapozhnikov: "On the tops of the hills is observed unusually warm temperature in winter time. By the notes of Sapozhnikov, the glacier on Belukha moved back by one hundred and eighty meters"¹². During the comparison of etude Belukha and the photo of Sapozhnikov¹³, the absolute identity of snow cover spots and glacier outlines strike the eye and this is impossible because the photo was taken during the expedition in 1897, but the picture was painted almost thirty years later. Additional confirmation of the spoken hypothesis is the comparison of Belukha's peaks outlines. The second from the left, "double" peak by Sapozhnikov and in etude of N.K. Roerich has different peaks' height, that in "Victory" painting (1942) (Fig. 4.) they fuse in one peak, because the higher peak "merges" the neighboring. But in our photo (Fig. 5), the double outline of the second peak is seen clearly – both peaks are almost equal in height. It is known, that in 1900 one of the hilltops (or "spokes") of Belukha changed its outline and in 1904 the second "spoke" fell down. It is worth reminding that the expedition and photo of V.V. Sapozhnikov refer the year to 1897. In view of this, N.K. Roerich in 1926 "being by the foot of Belukha", could not fail to notice so clear external changes. Furthermore, he was interested in the movement of Burhanism (it began in 1904) and there couldn't be unknown the Altaians' omen for him: "when all of the three spokes of Katynbash mountain (Belukha) snow peaks fall down", there will be the time of Oiroi (the messenger of White Burkhan) returning – as it was pointed in one of the legends. In locals view, it wouldn't be for a long time, when the third "spoke" would fall down¹⁴.

Very little is known about the Altaic painting cycle of N.K. Roerich in the study of art today. The researchers of N.K. Roerich's Altaic creation (L.R. Tsesyulevich, E.P. Matochkin, M.I. Kachalskaya) mention different compositions which are ranked with Altaic cycle. For example, according to M.I. Kachalskaya there are seven paintings, L.R. Tsesyulevich numbers them to sixteen and E.P. Matochkin numbers more than twenty of them. Not all pictures and etudes are found, the whereabouts of many of them



FIG. 4. *N.K. ROERICH. VICTORY (OR "THE SERPENT GORYNYCH") (1942), CANVAS, TEMPERA, 76.2 X 122. (NOVOSIBIRSK, HOUSE OF SCIENTISTS.)*



FIG. 5. *BELUKHA. VIEW FROM THE SOUTH. MATERIALS OF THE 1996 EXPEDITION. (PHOTO BY THE AUTHOR)*

are unknown. Some compositions are only mentioned in catalogues.

The white range of canvases, which are connected with Altai, landed abroad (especially the paintings during the period 1920-1930, when the artist's connection with Russia was broken). This author managed to find and compare the catalogues' data of forty eight artists' pictures concerning

the said period and distinguish them into self-dependent, so-called *Altaicycle*. The materials, which were collected by this author during two expeditions, also played valuable role in the identification of Altaic landscapes with the artist's creations.

According to L.R. Tsesyulevich, the travel impressions of the artist found their reflection not only in his diary notes, but in the permanent work with his painter's case which was strapped to the saddle. The hardwork multiplying into inexhaustible creative impulses, didn't leave him in encampments as well. It is about that time that *Etude. Supposedly Altai Mountains* (1926), was painted which is preserved in Barnaul, in the Altaic History, Literature of Art and Culture Museum.



FIG. 6. N.K. ROERICH. *VESSEL UNSPILLED* (1927) CANVAS, TEMPERA, 124.4 X 165. (THE USA, DALLAS, BERRIES COLLECTION)

N.K. Roerich wrote in his diary *Altai-Himalaya*, that the painting *Vessel Unspilled* has been started. The most dark blue, the most ringing mountains. The clearness itself, as on Falute. And he is carrying his vessel down the mountain"¹⁵.



FIG. 7. N.K. ROERICH. *THE GUARD OF THE DESERT* (1941), CANVAS, TEMPERA, 48 X 79. (MOSCOW, MEMORIAL FLAT OF YU.N. ROERICH).

The Guard of the cup (1928-30), *The Holder of the cup* (1937), *The Guard of the desert* (1941) (Fig. 7). These paintings reflect travel impressions of the artist. Such stone sculptures (in archaeology they are called “stone babas”) were often found on his expedition route both in Altai and Mongolia. Great number of ancient graves, barrows and other witnesses of the times of great migration of peoples are found in Mountain Altai. “Deer stones, kereksurs, stone babas, walls of unknown towns, though they were described and counted, but they didn’t show the ways of the peoples”¹⁶.

Now it is already possible to say that the ways of the peoples are shown due to the research of historians, archeologists on the territory of Altai mountains. L.N. Gumilyov, in particular, untangling genealogical threads of ancient nomads and reconstructing harmonious colourful picture of ethnic diversity of the Great Steppe, was able to restore their ways and to define the place of Altai among them. “Burial grounds of turkuts of Tolos division cover almost all steppe slopes of the valleys of Eastern Altai. These are so called stone fences which are connected with stone sculptures of cheek-boned men in oriental robes, with a sword on their hip and a cup in the right hand. Ashes are often found inside of these fences, remains of the burnt dead body...”¹⁷(Fig. 8).

The distinctive feature of stone sculptures of Altai is a vessel in a



FIG. 8. *ALTAI STONE STATUE*. (PHOTO BY A. POZNYAKOV)

right hand as we see in the painting *The Guard of the Cup*. Probably one of them served as a model for painting of this picture. It also corresponds chronologically.



FIG. 9. *N.K. ROERICH. THE LAMES ARE RETURNING (1932)*. (NOT ATTRIBUTED)

The Lames are returning, (1932), (Fig. 9) supposedly is kept at the Roerich's Museum in New York. Very likely, the picture was named not by the artist himself. Two Altaians in characteristic headgears of the *bashlyk* type are depicted on the canvas. Behind their backs one can see supports (boar-spears, which resemble lyre), on which the guns are put for rear sight. The Altaians in Roerich's painting are riding the horses, but the horses are almost not seen, the high grass hides them. In his diary *Altai-Himalayas*, N.K. Roerich writes: "When we cross Edigol, Altai wide open space spread before us. It bloomed with all the colours of green and dark blue tints. It got white with far snow. There were grass and flowers as high as a horse rider. One can't find even horses here. Such grass attire was nowhere seen"¹⁸. V.V. Sapozhnikov describes these places in his monograph *Along Russian and Mongolian Altai* as follows: "In more crumped and damp valleys where the blacken species join the larch, the grasses grow up to gigantic sizes, forming the so-called "great grass". In the blacken part of Upper Katun and especially in Upper Berel, "great grass" hides not only a horse, but raises to the head of the rider"¹⁹.

Just the same landscape we see in the picture *Krishna-Lel* (Fig. 10) (1932): the same grasses "to the height of the rider" as in the previous canvas, far away behind the black rocky mountains one can see whites – snowy peaks. A typical Altai mountainous landscape. *Krishna-Lel* himself is depicted in an ancient Russian costume, but with eastern features of face.

During all his creative work Roerich proves the common character of cultures of East and West, India and Russia: "After industrial talks Vakhramei (Atamanov Vakhramei Semyonovich – N.K. Roerich's guide about Altai – I. Zh.) begins to purr a certain tale. I am trying to understand: "And take me, you silent desert. And how can I take you? I am a desert having no mansions and palaces...". It is known. Josaph's tale. "Do you know whom you are singing about, Vakhramei? You are singing about Buddha. Thus, Boddhisatva – Boddhisatva is altered into Josaf". In such a way Buddha penetrated into Kerzhaks' consciousness"²⁰. It was there in Altai in 1926 that N.K. Roerich wrote an essay *The Tsar's son*, which appeared in the book *Shambala*. He continued his reasonings begun in the



FIG. 10. N.K. ROERICH. *KRISHNA-LEL* (1932)
(MUNICIPAL MUSEUM, ALLAHABAD, INDIA. NOT ATTRIBUTED)

diary: "So on the Altai spurs a grey-bearded Old-believer is singing. And near him on the mountain a little shepherd like an ancient Lel or blessed Krishna twining wreathes out of marigolds loudly proclaims another verse, devoted to the same sacred memory"²¹. In the researcher's consciousness, the concepts "Buddha" and "Altai" are quite closely connected. The Altai mountains are identified with the name of Buddha. They say, that the Blessed after visiting Khotan also visited Altai where there is the sacred Belukha"²².

Oirot – is a herald of White Burkhan (1924) (Fig. 11) from the series of *The Banners of the East*. N.K. Roerich mentions this legend in his diary *Altai-Himalayas* in the chapter about Ladakh describing the events of the year 1925: "Buddha goes far away into the hiding places of the mountains. The legend leads the courageous seeker to Altai. And the tale about White Burkhan is kept in Altai in all its vitality"²³. The picture was painted in 1924. Therefore, the artist heard the legend long before visiting Altai, bringing it from the Buddhistic world. And here he found the real confirmation – Oirotiya highland – is a stronghold of a new faith, it is a branch of Buddhism – Burkhanism. The inhabitants of the region are waiting for the arrival of the Saviour, a new personification of Buddha –

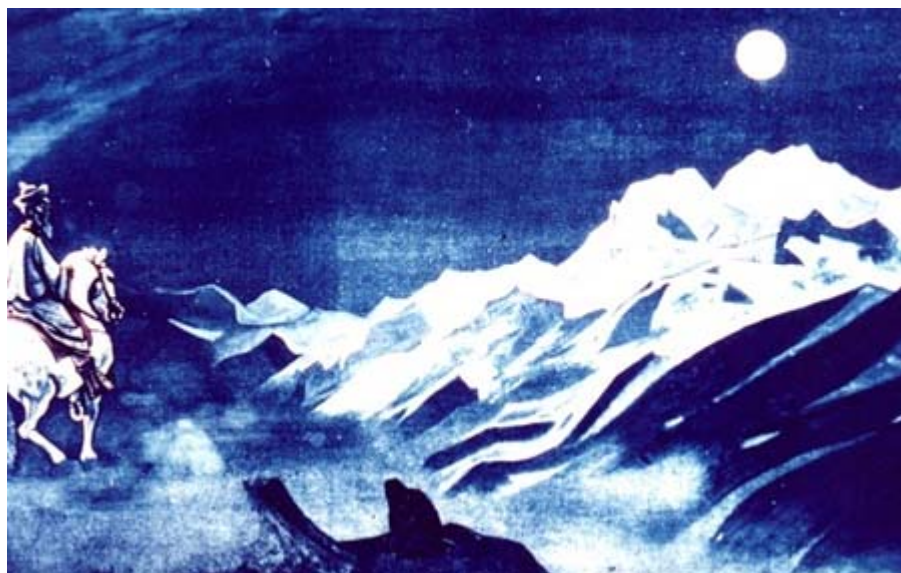


FIG. 11. N.K. ROERICH. *OIROTS – HERALD OF WHITE BURKHAN* (1924),
CANVAS, TEMPERA, 73,6 x 117.(COLLECTION OF D. BOLLING,
GRANDHEIWEN, MICHIGAN,USA.)

White Burkhan. All Asian people are waiting for him under the name of Geser-Khan and Maitreya. “It’s strange to see Oirots riders for the first time, Finno-Turkic kin, lost in the Altai mountains”, wrote the artist in his travel notes. – Only recently this region, full of beautiful forests, roaring streams and snow-white ranges has got its own name – Oirotiya. The country of the Blessed Oirots, people’s hero of this lonely tribe...”²⁴.

It is worth to mention the idealized attitude of the artist to the legend. Till now the Burkhanism problem had many white spots and gave a wide spectrum for scientific search. And in the twentieth century, which was marked by political, economic and religious instability, it was very difficult to investigate its sources and causes. In the cult of Burkhanism, the elements of Buddhism, Lamaism and Altai epic are whimsily entangled from one side and political and religious speculations from another.

The Song of Shambala (1943) (Fig. 12): At the foreground, a figure of a man in an ancient Russian attire is shown. The picture tells about the search of Shambala by the Russian people or as it was called in Russian manner – Belovodye. “In the far away countries, behind the Great lakes, behind the high mountains – there is a sacred place, where justice

flourishes. There lives supreme knowledge and supreme wisdom for the safety of the whole future mankind. This place is called Belovodye"²⁵.

In difficult times of religious and political persecutions, Russian people escaped far inland from weighty yoke of serfdom to impenetrable, blessed places. That way, where "milky rivers flow among jelly banks", where people lived happily and where the world's mystery was saved. This Promised Land for Old Believers became Uymonskaya Valley and the Ak-Kem river Valley. This river flows from the lake with same name by the foot of Belukha mountain.



FIG. 12. N.K. ROERICH. *THE SONG OF SHAMBALA* (1943). CANVAS, TEMPERA, 76.2 x 137.2. (COLLECTION OF S.N. ROERICH. BANGALORE, INDIA.)

Russian and Indian mythological systems, closely knit between themselves, supplementing each other, make up a harmonious picture of the world. From under Belukha, from "the Northern Shambala" (Altai was called so by the Roerich's) people went to look for that mysterious Shambola or Belovodye, about which there are secret tales. In his book *The Heart of Asia*, N.K. Roerich offered "Prophecies about Shambola and Maytreya", where the notion "Northern Shambala" is met not once: "The legendary mountain Meru according to Mahabharata and also the legendary hill Shambala in Buddhology – both were situated to the north..."²⁶. And from Altai, from the north people go to the south to look for Shambala: "Indeed Altai-Himalayas – are two magnets, two balances, two bases"²⁷.

In Uymon, the Roerichs learnt about real travels to Shambala (Belovodye). "Atamanov's grandfather and Ognev's father went searching Belovodye... In 1923 Sokoliha with Bukhtarma people went searching Belovodye. Nobody came back but the letter from Sokoliha was received. She writes that she wasn't in Belovodye, but lives well. But she doesn't write where she lives. All people know about Belovodye"²⁸. "Many people went to Belovodye. Our grandfathers Atamanov and Artamonov also went there. But they were not allowed to stay there and they had to return. They told many miracles about this place. But they were not allowed to say still more"²⁹.

Another secret legend has much in common with the legend about Belovodye, i.e. about Belowground Chude. The artist really came across it and again in Altai. *Belowground people* (or "Belowground Chud' ") (1928-1930)(Fig. 13); this picture has the same name as the card-board of 1913 ("Belowground Chude" ., temp., 51 À 76; Novgorod, the Museum of History and Art). Probably even then in 1913 Roerich knew Finno-Ugric variant of this legend. One and the same plot is depicted here. But if in the painting of 1913 the landscape is flat resembling the landscapes of Russian North, on the canvas of 1928 the action takes place against a background of snow crowned peaks. The entrance into the cave steeply going into the depth of the earth is hung with clusters of stalactites. Grey-blue colouring of the picture and a fragment of the sky of pure blue look like the hope for return of bright times.

The archeologist from Novosibirsk V.E. Larichev, researching many years the mountains and caves of Altai, confirms: "In stalactite, covering by ice vaults of caves the outlines of entry into dungeons, which the artist observed near Black Anuy in Karagol are guessed"³⁰. As of the painting's plot connection with Altai is mythological and chronological as well, there are all reasons to confirm that the scenery belongs to Altaic places.

In the feature story "the below ground inhabitants", which was a part of his *Shambala* book and written in the year 1928, as well as the painting, the artist brought back to memory: "In Altai mountains, in wonderful mountain valley Uymon the grey-haired Old Believer told me: "I'll prove you, that the legend about Chudes – the below ground



FIG. 13. N.K. ROERICH. *BELOWGROUND PEOPLE* (1928-1930), CANVAS, TEMPERA, 86.3 X 147. (N. ROERICH'S MUSEUM, NEW YORK, USA).

people isn't a fantasy! I'll lead you to enter into underworld"... - and right then can't stop himself from etymological investigations: "It's remarkably, that "chud' " in Russian has the same basis, like the word "chudo"(wonder). That's why we may suppose, that Chud' is a wonderful tribe"³¹.

The researcher reverently and sensitively listens attentively the folktale: "Here it is the entry into the great below ground kingdom. When chude came in underground passage, they closed the entrance by stones. Now we are staying exactly by this underground passage". But N.K. Roerich has never been just the collector of fairytales and legends. All his artistic works are based on deep knowledge in different fields of science: "We stayed in front of huge burial, surrounded by big stones. It was so typical for the great migration period. The same burials with perfect patterns of Gothic relics we saw in southern-Russian steppes, in the foothills of northern Caucasus"³². Apparently, V. Atamanov showed the big Tsars' mounds of the Scythian period, there are plenty of them in Russian, Mongolian and Kazakhstani Altai. But for N.K. Roerich, the symbolic side of the painting, carried itself great spiritual and emotional opportunities: "But chude has gone not ever so long. When happy time returns and people from Belovodye come and give to the whole nation the great science, then chude will come with all getting treasures"³³.

N.K. Roerich addressed to this legend once more, towards the end of his life.



**FIG. 14. N.K. ROERICH. *THE WINNERS OF TREASURE* (1947),
CANVAS, TEMPERA, 60.9 x 102.
(S.N. ROERICH'S COLLECTION. BANGALORE, INDIA.)**



**FIG. 15. N.K. ROERICH. *EPIC HEROES AWAKE* (1940),
CANVAS, TEMPERA, 91.4 x 152.
(COLLECTION OF S.N. ROERICH. BANGALORE, INDIA.)**

We see fancy gorges of mountains again. But now the earth interior has opened wide and blazing belowground fire is lighting up the figures

of people, taking away from dungeon so long keeping treasures. We won't see realistic scenery here. The language of art is schematic, but unusually concise. It sounds like triumphing final of the legend, as the will of the great thinker and a sagacious person: "... the glorious time of human peelings will come and in these days the great chude will appear again in its full glory"³⁴.

(Fig. 15). *Epic heroes awoke* (1940). This canvas is an example of quotation by the author himself. The artist uses the same background of mountains and the same outlines of the cave as in the picture "Belowground Chude" (1928).

But the plot has something in common with this legend, getting a new, actual and at the same time prophetic sounding taking into consideration the historical events. Now, as if a spectator is inside the same cave and watches a grand picture of awakening from an age-long dream of ancient epic heroes. The painter forebodes the coming evil for his Motherland: The Great Patriotic War 1941-1945 and prophesies; during the hard years for the Russian land even stones became warriors. And at the exit from the cave, the prince with his friends is standing, stretching his hand to the far shining peaks, where their heroic power is necessary.



FIG. 16. *N.K. ROERICH. FORGING OF A SWORD (1941),
CANVAS, TEMPERA, 92 X 93.
(STATE RUSSIAN MUSEUM, ST. PETERSBURG, 7103).*

Forging of a Sword (1941) (Fig. 16). In the diary *Altay-Himalayas*, there is a note: "The blacksmiths from Kurumchi are strange obscure people who had not only passed by, but they lived in the limits of Altai and Transbaikal. Well-known division into Huns, Alans and Goths is subdivided into a lot of unexplained units..." Roerich draws cultural parallels between blacksmiths from Kurumchi and Nibelungs. The name itself (Kurumchi blacksmiths – I.Zh.) shows that this tribe was good at metal treatment, but from where and where was the tribe going? Doesn't the peoples' memory mean the authors of metal wares, which antiquities of Minusinsk and Ural are famous for? When you hear about these blacksmiths, you unknowingly remember the legendary Nibelungs who had moved far into the West"³⁵. The whole colouring of the painting resembles *The Song about Nibelungs*. This picture painted in 1941, is one more artistic prophecy: in anxious flashes of underground fire the figures of blacksmiths are moving very quickly. They are forging a fiery sword, which will bring freedom to the world. The face of one of them, lighted by the flashes from the hearth has the characteristic features of a representative of Turkic tribe. In some catalogues this picture has double name: *Forging of a Sword Nibelungs*.

L.N. Gumilyov in his monograph *Ancient Turks* investigates this secret culture. He affirms that "Kurumchi blacksmiths" – are Kurikans from Angara region, who had already at the end of 6th century appeared at the arena of world history as the people who for the first time in Central Asia mastered industrial iron extraction and due to it put themselves into independent condition according to China and Tibet"³⁶. Their bloomery iron was incredibly solid and tractable as it contained 99.45% pure metal. Here, decrypting the legend about Turks' origin, he struck upon *The Song about Nibelungs*: "This plot has been put into Chinese chronicle as one of the versions of the Turk's ethnogenesis... Just think, quadric translation is in front of us. The Hunnic variant was translated into Old Turkic language, it in its turn was translated into Chinese, and from Chinese it was translated into European languages..."³⁷.

In his painting *Zvenigorod* (1933) (Fig. 17), N.K. Roerich connects this poetic Russian word with Altai. The *Altay-Himalayas* diary states at

page 291: “We saw Belukha on August 17. There was so clearly and sounding. Zvenigorod indeed”.

Vasiliy Atamanov remembered: “He said (Roerich – I.Zh.) that in future the city will be built and let it called “Zvenigorod”³⁸. There is imaged Orthodox Christian temple, surrounded by saints, on the left and right on far distance, the Valley, surrounded by mountains is visible. There are reasons to think, that these are the Uymon places – resembling by outlines, and also close to the plot.



**FIG. 17. N.K. ROERICH. ZVENIGOROD (1933),
CANVAS, TEMPERA, 47 X 78.7. (USA. LOCATION UNKNOWN)**

There is an instruction in one of the books of “Living Ethics” – “Leaves of Moriya’sgarden”: “It’ll become clear later how to build Zv...You’ve already got the sizes of the heights and how to arrange the steps...”

Thus, we can draw the following conclusion: The given historical research has widened the list of N.K. Roerich’s works referring to the Altai cycle. But this work is only the beginning of the huge, laborious process on attribution and identification of the colossal inheritance of the artist, on finding there etudes and pictures, connected with Altai.

From the point of view of N.K. Roerich, Altai is not only the geographical centre of Eurasia, unique natural, historical and cultural phenomenon, but it is also the subject of cosmic evolution, which has to

fulfill a special united geopolitical and cultural mission. And if here on Altai, global problems of humanity will be solved with the help of neantropocentrist methods, then the mountain system of Altai – Himalayas may be the first starting site for the original ways of the space researches³⁹. Then man, learning the cosmos, will feel that his proto-homeland is an endless geocosmic space, the essence of which is a human himself.

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SACRAL MOUNTAINS OF ALTAI AND SYMBOLISM OF N.K. ROERICH

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ABSTRACT

The creation of N.K. Roerich is part of the whole theme taking into consideration the context of the "sacral" issue. The article deals with methodological aspects.

Keywords: sacral, mountains, myth, typology, symbolism, hermeneutics, art.

The article is made as complex science research in which the sacral issue is taken into consideration as the basic category. The variety of performances of the sacral in real phenomenon requires some ordination of them for avoiding loose adaptation and confusion. For this reason, this author follows the typology and peculiarities of sacralization character of those natural objects like *mountains*, taking the example of Altai mountains.

The category of sacral and the theme of sacral character of mountains which is connected with Altai, Himalayas, reasonably turns us to Nicolay Konstantinovich Roerich's creation and to the sacral category's implementation in his paintings. Taking this into account, the artistic creation of N.K. Roerich, being considered like the art of symbolism, where the senses are covered and require their uncovering, the problem of *method's specificity* in the research of humanitarian sphere is actualized. In the function of this universal for humanitarian knowledge methodology, hermeneutic logic is positioned. Its usage according to Roerich's works will probably open new worldview and in fact, human senses of his creation.

The "sacral" category is connected etimologically with Latin "sacer",

that is “devoted to God”, “sacred”. The thing is that the events of “sacral” and “sacralization” go back to a remote past of humanity, when *myth* was the only way of the world perception by ancient human’s consciousness.

That’s why definitely in the context of ancient mythological world’s picture, the earliest process of sacralization by the people was occurring in reality. They endured these phenomena by some supernatural features, connecting them with invisible world of Gods and spirits. Traditionally, the adaptation process of “sacral” event to collective consciousness of society occurred by the way of special display – ritual with the help of which, human connects with the object of admiration. Thus, via ritual and cult display, human gets an opportunity to address to sacred – *sacral*.

For the first time the definition of sacral was concretised by Rudolf Otto, who defines it as “frightful secret”, restraining by its mighty supremacy, causing a sensation of “horror”¹. Later Mircea Eliade, searching the phenomenon of “sacral”, describes this event like about something, absolutely *different* from ordinary, natural reality, completely different from clear “worldly”². He calls this hierophany and also notices its different terms-aspects. By primary religious understandings, connecting with Nature cult, the reason of its objects’ sacralization is human understanding, that they have valuable qualities, useful for the society.

One of the most traditional sacral places for humans are mountains. There are sacred mountains in many nations and people had immense respect and honor for them. Sacred mountains are considered like the places of revelation, the center and axis of Universe, like the source of life, way to heaven, the Gods’ place of stay, places of hermitage or a kind of special events, which according to folk tales had happened once or will happen in future. Many mythological plots are evidence of it.

Mountain is the place of living for spirits and heaven where the souls of the righteous go. In Chinese beliefs, it refers first of all to spirits of five “sacred peaks” of China. In Russian mythology they are *Riphaei* (Ripaei) mountains. According to ancient Indian legends, the center of Universe is the sacred mountain Meru. The main gods of Indian pantheon live on the top of this mountain. Hindus sacralize Himalayas, seeing the source of

their sacred rivers in them, first of all – celestial Ganges. Kailas mountain for Hindus is cosmic “range”, it connects heaven, earth and underworld between them. The locals of Altai also honor Ak-Sumyor (White Sumeru) – the throne of heaven god Ulgen, the umbilical cord, connecting Cosmos and Earth.

Let’s consider various causes of sacral display. *On the one hand*, as Eliade points out, the mountains’ sacrality is connected with *getting favour, mercy* from them or their spirits for human. On the other hand – mountains are important *cosmogonic* objects, arousing religious-aesthetic, high-minded emotions by human. And thirdly, it’s the connection of famous folk legends, predictions with the definite place. These *three typological peculiarities* are completely found relating to *sacral* question and Altai mountains’ *sacralization’s character* as well.

The reverence of mountain passages in Altai – one of the typical varieties of mountainous cult is, conditioned by the category of *helpfulness and mercy of their spirits-masters* concerning *human*. It illustrates *the first typological peculiarity* of the reason and character of mountains’ sacralization according to our *typology*. Passages were always dangerous and difficult for pedestrians, pack-animals and wheeled carts. That’s why to cross over a mountain, it is to leave behind oneself a kind of danger, thanks to mercy of passage’s spirit-master. So, today passage’s paths and roads are usually marked with thanks by some kind of memorable thing: big rock, *oboo* – small rock hill, collection by travellers, tied on trees or bushes colorful ribbons – *kyira*.

This is one of the most ancient ceremony of Altaians. The ribbon is tied to the branch of a tree from eastern side, which as well as a mountain becomes the Axis, heading to the sky by branches, and to the ground by roots. Thus, people, who tie *kyira*, venerate the master of Heaven – Ulgen and the master of underworld – Erlic.

The same *typological archaic reason of mountains’ sacralization* in Altai is the connection of their honoring with hunting grounds (*helpfulness*), which were favored by mountains themselves and their spirits. Hunting is the traditional form of providing for the economic life of Altai mountains’ locals. In such a case mining itself was connected with certain sacred

names of these crafts. These names meant the mountain itself and spirit presenting in it as well. Among these tens of names, there were the names of famous mountains in Altai: Babyrgan, Altyn-Tu, Kebe-Tu. Sometimes in folk-beliefs of Altai, masters of mountain turn into anthropomorphic image: different hunting legends and stories tell about the meetings with these “masters” – old ones and young, men and women.

It’s important, that “masters of mountain” and sacred mountains themselves are perceived like tribal mountains, each tribe has its own mountain. Each tribe offered prayers in honor of its tribal mountain, giving sacrifices to it before the beginning of the autumn craft. It seems, that tribe’s members are descendants of their tribe, named as: *tyos-tag* (ancestor-mountain), *ulug-tag* (great mountain), *aru-tyos* (pure ancestor).

In the past, the animals of light color – white cattle were sacrificed to tribal mountains. Later, the honoring of mountain’ master was restricted by way of treating by milk, meat, tea and alcohol. By Altaians’ thinking, tribal, sacred mountains were prohibited for hunting, grazing of livestock, harvesting of wood, because all animals, trees, grasses belonged only to the spirit-master, who favored hunting, but in another place.

In one of Roerich’s paintings *The Lames are returning (The Horsemen of Mongolia)*, two Altaians are imaged in the canvas in typical head-dresses, looking like *bashlyks* and there are hunting supports (forked sticks) behind their backs for putting guns on them and taking aim. They are typical only for Altaic hunters, so this shows, that some pictures of the artist were painted by his travel impressions along Altai³.

It should be also noted that mountains might be honored, *sacred* in those places, where *valuable* mountain minerals gold, rock-salt, precious stones, were mined.

The second typological peculiarity of Altai mountains’ sacral character, which is connected with their mythological cosmogonic function, is very expressive in the legends about Belukha mountain. This mountain is *sacred* among Altaians, has special sacral place; that’s why it is prohibited to climb up Belukha, it is allowed only to venerate it. The image of sacred Belukha is surrounded by mystic prohibitions. According to Altai beliefs, it is prohibited to make noise, speak loudly, carry iron things by the foot of

Belukha. Altaian hunters never hunted near it. Men could go and offer prayers to Altai Master, but only before definite border by the foot of the mountain. Women were not ever allowed to come closer even to this border. The sacred mountain Belukha is the symbol of cleanness of spirit and the *center of creation*. By Altai beliefs, Belukha is “*umbilical cord of the Earth*”.

The peaks of Belukha are visible from far, attracting attention by unusual shape of the mountain in the form of two white, lofty tops of a mountain glaringly shining in the sun. N.K. Roerich confirmed that Belukha mountain is situated exactly “in the center of four oceans”. It gives an additional mystical-cosmogonic shade to the mountain, defining it as one of the energetic centers of the planet. N.K. Roerich made his contribution to mystification of Belukha mountain, being with “Central-Asian expedition in Ust-Koksinsk district”. It is known, that the artist laid special emphasis on Altai and Siberia on the whole, considering Belukha mountain not only the geographical center of Eurasia but there are three great religions in this place as well – Orthodoxy, Buddhism and Islam⁴. The absorption of each of these religions in different periods of the artist’s life is reflected in his famous paintings: *Christ in desert*, *Buddha – the winner*, *Mohammed on Hira mountain*.

Besides, in the legends of Old Believer Russian population about Belovodye (White Water) country, Roerich had seen the analogue of Himalayan fables about Shambala – mystic country, which opens only for righteous and clear people. This theme is reflected in such famous canvases of the author like *Belukha* and *Shambala Song*. And today many modern searchers of “magic” try to find Belovodye – Altaic Shambala exactly in the district of Belukha, because Belukha is a kind of gate to this fairy country. And here we deal with *the third typological peculiarity* of natural object *sacralization*, that is *mystic-eventful*⁵.

Another legend about Belukha mountain as the place of future Armageddon also attracted big interest of Roerich. In one of his pictures with the same name “Armageddon”, the author imagined all horrors of human tragedy of the promised end of the world. In accordance with this old fable, it will be the time of earthquakes, floods in the earth and the last

world war of the people will begin, but everything will stop before Belukha. The woman will go out from the mountain, she'll stop the war and "golden century" will begin after it. There is also another legend about falling down of all Belukha peaks before the end of the world. That's why, partial falling of one of the mountain's peaks, during the earthquake in Altai, caused anxiety among the locals.

The legend about nation *chude* also evoked great interest of N.K. Roerich. In his book *The Heart of Asia* he wrote about one Altaic Old Believer, who showed rock hill to him with the words: "so, in this place *chude* went down the ground. It was when "the white Tsar" came to make a war, but *chude* didn't want to live under the influence of "white Tsar". *Chude* went down the ground and dammed passages by stones. However, as N.K. Roerich confirms in his book, *chude* must return to the ground when certain teachers come from Belovodye and bring great science for humanity. As if then *chude* will go out from dungeons together with all their treasures. The great traveller devoted the painting *The Belowground Chude*⁶. It has to be said, all people of Altai not only the Old Believers know the legend about "Altaic *chude*", which go down the ground of its own free will.

Thus, in this part of the article it is possible to summarize our *methodological* researches. That is: *for the first time* in view of this work the *author's typology* of archaic reasons' "peculiarities" and the sacralization's character of such natural objects like mountains, got the foundation. Three main types are distinguished:

- mountains' sacralization, which is conditioned by the character of mythological-meaningful *helpfulness* of them for humans;
- mountains' sacralization, which is conditioned by the mythological conception about their important *cosmogonic* function, arousing religious-aesthetic, high-minded feelings for humans;
- mountains' sacralization, which is conditioned by their *mystic-eventful* character.

The implementation of *sacral* category and mountains' *sacrality* in N.K. Roerich's creation: all three types were easily defined and related by the

artist. All above mentioned displays of “sacral” phenomenon are refracted through the prism of Roerich’s symbolism like the way of world perception. This is philosophical level of understanding and emotional experience of sacral. And in this symbolic refraction, sacral discovers its reflection in art creation of Roerich.

So, the particularity of N.K. Roerich’s paintings is that for gross audience and in many cases for specialists, the understanding of covering senses is inaccessible, encoded by the artist in his works. It is necessarily to consider that creation of the artist from the beginning till the end, implemented in the “direction” of symbolism – artistically-aesthetic stream with the positioning of the main thesis with the thought about covering of the genuine, sacral essence of existence under the fraudulent “coverlet” of the material world.

The author’s artistic inheritance is great, but it should be noticed that especially his *mountain landscapes* present the main part of his pictorial canvases in which the beauty of world is reflected. There is an opinion among art experts, that just in the period of Asian expedition this theme was touched up by Nikolay Constantinovich for the first time, but in reality this theme occupied a remarkable place in Roerich’s creative works long before.

Of course, the image of mountains in the pictures of the artist-symbolist is as a symbol. Let’s remember the myth about the origin of the mountains, told by Roerich himself in his exoteric work *Fiery World*⁷. The myth says about the Creator of the land, who cared very much about the people of the “fruit-bearing” valleys. But the World Mother stopped him having said that people would find both bread and trade on the Valleys, but gold would make the Valleys dirty and people with clean spirits wouldn’t be able to save themselves anywhere from it. She asked to give them wings and mountains to save themselves from gold. And the Creator answered, that it was early to give them wings, and gave them mountains. Thus, we see that Roerich divides the whole mankind into two classes: spiritual (the people of the mountains) and not spiritual (the people of the Valleys).

Traditionally in special literature, taking into consideration the

mountains in Roerich's work as a symbol, the authors correspond them, as a rule, with the image of "the stairway". It's interpreted as a vertical line of endless steps of spiritual ascent of a man. Moreover, it is stressed that a mountain is the point of collation of spiritual and physical worlds, the World Axis. This analogy isn't new: this is both *lestvitsa* (the stairway) of Reverent Ioann Lestvichnik and "the stairway of Jacob".

The only mediator between two worlds in symbolism – is the *symbol*, but it isn't the definite sign. *Symbol* – it's a mystic hint, allegorical meaning, half-word, transience. Therefore, symbolism in art, ideological base of which is philosophical symbolism, rejects the truth of rational cognition, the more so as rational arguments, opposing with irrational "intuition" as the only method of understanding of the secrets of universe, as the way to another, *sacral world*, inaccessible for rational perception. It is necessary to say that in the art of symbolism a symbol is not a static sign, but permanent, non-stopped *associative movement*, as a *stream-symbolization*. A symbol is born and lasts there, where *initial* (form, sound, colour) speaks not about itself, but always about *something* different, semantically going out of itself limits. Namely "mobility" and irrational idealistic nature of a symbol stipulate not exact, associative figurativeness, washed away semantics, subjective rarefied aesthetics of N.K. Roerich's paintings.

Therefore mountain – symbol in Roerich's art doesn't coincide with the image of the mountain itself. *The symbol of the mountain* considered as a function, includes in itself completely *different sense* than a simple narration about a real world. Roerich's mountains are like screens, on which by a fleeting radiance- twinkling of spiritual, sacral depths of the universe. To open these depths in the world means to open them first of all in oneself. It is just a break into spiritual, sacral. This is the highest level of *sacral* manifestation, which is such *human emotional experience* of hidden measures of the world when it is impossible to express it with the usual human language. Then the artist speaks by *symbol language* which is non-stopped *associative movement*. That's why the super expression of sacral correlating with the most hidden Spiritual Mystery which is the base of universal – comes forward the Spirit of a "delicate" man according to Roerich – "a man of mountains" or *gorniy* (celestial) human.

Clean, sheer tints of blue, pink and white colours are dominated in Roerich's pictures. In mountain landscapes of N. K. Roerich there are many tints of the blue colour – the colour of above the world, *gorniy*, spiritual (sacral) reality. Just the same dominated blue colour is present in the icons of a Russian icon-painter of 15th century Dionysius. Sometimes, in blue-coloured pictures of Roerich simultaneously very contrast inclusions of back or deep dark tints of some other colour are present. It is felt as some dissonance.

Undoubtedly, symbol of a *mountain* in the artist's pictures, in the first place symbolizes the category of *sacral*, as transcendence of another world sounds from the canvases by solemn music of colours. The colours of the mountain's peaks in the artist's pictures are almost unreal, almost unearthly, shining radiances, iridescent hints.

In the base of the given artistic effect Roerich uses the method of "direct correspondence", well-grounded in the limits of the theory of art of symbolism and based on the effect of synesthesia (Greek synthesis). The method of direct correspondence shows itself, for example, in word-combinations. We say: "a warm colour", "a cold hint", "major red", "coloured sounds", "singing colours", "aromatic" and "having taste". Therefore, *symbol of colour* as one of the basic foundation in the art of symbolism, got its basis in the theory of "spiritual" as a phenomenon of the symbolic perception of the world. On the whole, the creative method of Roerich corresponds to the worldview and artistic conception of symbolism.

It is necessary to understand, that Roerich's paintings bear conditionally-symbolic character. They are not about what we see in nature, but about what we usually can't perceive: perception of the spiritual world or transformed world. His pictures are a kind of reports, "texts" with deep meanings as if hidden from the "uninitiated". That's why there is a necessity to decipher them, to rationalize their irrationalized and non-linguistic components. Specificity of art, which speaks conditional language of symbols dictates to the researcher the choice of the corresponding method. This demand is evident, as in a given case, rational approach, traditional system of building logical models, *rational* character

of thinking are not enough owing to heterogeneity of qualitative unlikeness, spiritual disproportion of the subject “what” and artistic method “how”.

Due to this circumstance, the research demand in “dialogic-understanding” ways, in interpretational methods, in specific methodology is stipulated. Such methodology is hermeneutic logic with its interpretational, dialogic, “understanding” methods, reconstructional hypotheses, with its ways of “getting used”, “empathy”, methods of *abstraction* (turning off from unessential) and *idealization* (picking out something extraordinary, special). All this displays hermeneutic logic more effective in the research of the art of conditional-symbolic character in contrast to classical logic, which has certain methodological limits. Therefore, hermeneutics may be regarded as universal methodological standard for the whole complex of humanitarian sciences.

It should be said that the hermeneutics’ scientist is always oriented to the so-called “better understanding” of the “text” than the author himself knew and understood. The solution of this task is realized by the researcher in a dialogue and through the dialogue with the author, who “resolve” himself in the text, outspokenly professing or on the contrary, consciously or unconsciously hiding his personal feelings.

A dialogue as a specific means of possible understanding of one subject to another subject with all his pronounced and unpronounced but presented not clearly in a text, created by him, supposes the presence of a special spiritual and emotional sympathy of the researcher himself, demands the presence of his own existence experience. He must be able “to practice reality”, step over the border of the public and uncontroversial rationality. Having overcome the gravity of this system, staying one to one with the world, face to face, understanding that the world is more complicated than a man used to think about it, he chooses these special scientific methods and comes to the understanding of the complicated scheme of their usage.

All the above-mentioned methodological positions are called to overcome the standards of descriptive approach to the creative work of N. Roerich, templates of interpretation of his paintings, which exist now

in science and are the same in all publications, supported by stable conventionalism.

Meanwhile, the creation of Roerich still remains not so researched and that is why not understandable as compared with other painters-symbolists. It is first of all due to the fact that except for his main ideological doctrine – “philosophy of symbolism”, the author also tried to adapt to it “cosmism” of Russian philosophy and the idea of Christian “collegiality”, and eastern mysticism. And there appears the feeling that all these components didn’t form ideological integrity in the author’s vision of the world and its reflection in the art. It is displayed in the semantic plan, when artistic world of the author all of a sudden becomes fractional, kaleidoscopic.

His picture *Krishna* is perceived somewhat eclectically. In the picture on the hillock a light haired boy in the traditional Russian costume is playing a small pipe. Lel! – in such a way many researchers interpret this picture. But the author insists: - Krishna! You may believe the author’s word, believe a settled interpretation about the unity Lel-Krishna, but a spectator, being honest to himself, is absolutely sure that Lel is not Krishna.

The last worldview “stronghold” among other philosophical ideas which the author shared, except the philosophy of symbolism (Schopenhauer, Nietzsche), is the study Agni-Yoga, which is characterized by parables, allegories, revelations which were given by a certain invisible Teacher to Roerich “by word of mouth”. Exoteric, allegorical character of the given texts prevents the uninitiated reader from penetration into the depths of the closed for him senses. To understand them it is necessary to have a teacher-interpreter for a reader. And as the scientist takes on trust the reality of a magic Teacher, he himself must become the Teacher. And here the science may resent.

Therefore, mainly, we are charmed with Roerich’s pictures, but don’t see the real senses of his pictures. That’s why judging by the titles of his works, we descriptively refer to either the folklore or to the ideas and senses of the Christian studies, to the Altai tales or Indian mythology, enumerating a great many names of their personalities, forming the rows of analogies. Due to such demand, the artistic world of the author is split

up, loses a certain inner semantic unity, accepting the character of some kaleidoscopic effect, making our understanding difficult.



**FIG. 1. N.K. ROERICH. *MOTHER OF THE WORLD* (1924),
TEMPERA ON CANVAS, 117.0 X 89.0. (NICHOLAS ROERICH MUSEUM,
NEW YORK, USA.)**

However, at the level of our aesthetic perception of artist's paintings, in a worldview dialogue with the author as a symbolist, using a corresponding creative method, we feel a wonderful unity of his perception of the world and its reflection in the art. What are the basic features of this world? Here we may speak about stylization of flat representation, as in icon-painting, about "crystalline graphics" of the pictures, about that palette of hints of sounding colours synesthesia effect, which characterizes the artist's works. Their combination gives birth to the effect of cosmic

push aside of nature from a man. As stated above, it is quite another, evanescent world. Is this the world having Transformation by the second parish of Christ? Or are these gleams of a new, spiritual plan, having fallen on the matter of the physical world?

But, if a previous thesis will be somehow clear to the rational consciousness, it is doubtful whether somebody “will recognize” in Roerich’s pictures the effect of *loneliness* of a small human before the greatness of the eternal mountains, shining with cold hints of dark blue, pink or blinding white. This is a lonely traveller, a lonely horse rider, a human lonely sitting on the edge of the rock. There is a sensation of a certain oecumenical homelessness, existentialistic desertion of a human in this world. The human goes by known and unknown ways to the Truth, which slips away from him, staying inaccessible. “Mother of the World” (Fig. 1) with shroud closed eyes, in a state of absolute harmonious peace, does she see a small human, his search for Shambala as wisdom, his aspiration to the Soul of the World?



FIG. 2. N.K. ROERICH. ARMAGEDDON (1936),
TEMPERA ON CANVAS. 92.0 X 122.0.
(STATE MUSEUM OF ORIENTAL ART. MOSCOW, RUSSIA)

Sometimes Roerich unites people in a kind of procession, as one can see in his painting “Armageddon” (Fig. 2). Traditional interpretations of the senses of this work lead to the following. In the “purification” fire all that became obsolete has burnt, negative, dark with a simultaneous indication to a line of black figures of people with crooks, bent because of the old age and from the loads on their backs. They have to go. Where? We see the artist’s sympathy. He depicts them – small and defenseless, it is impossible not to see it.



**FIG. 3. N.K. ROERICH. SVYATOGOR (1938-1942),
TEMPERA ON CANVAS. 122.0 X 91.5,
(STATE MUSEUM OF ORIENTAL ART. MOSCOW, RUSSIA).**

The same procession we see in the picture *The Belowground Chude*. The same small bent figures of people are going away, hiding in deep mountains’ caves forever. We know this legend but what does Roerich

suggest to see in his painting? How invocatory, how joyful and triumphantly sparkles the peak with perfect whiteness on the background of the ringing blue of the sky. Here is blessing! The victory of light! But small Chude people are going away.

As we see, the creation of Roerich is full of mysteries, illogicalness. Very often, the author declares one thing, but we can't see another one, about which the author "let out a secret" freely or not. Roerich's works can't be interpreted only by one way. They make us think, abstract from the usual stereotypes of intellectual thinking. They ask riddles and are waiting for their researcher, who can't fail to notice that in spite of the whiteness of the Orthodox temple and coming from it the same white light, there is an anxious red radiance on its unexpectedly black dome in the painting *Zvenigorod*. And ... how few "selected" in golden haloes above the heads at the table of solemn Meal. The world is empty. The dome is mournfully black with red radiance in it. There appeared not many people *gorniy people* or "mountainous people" (Roerich), among saved in Armageddon.

The theme of "big" human also present in Roerich's creation works. First of all, it is his *Epic hero* theme. At once you remember his picture *Svyatogor* (Fig. 3). He is so great that he doesn't locate in the space of the picture. His image is calm, serious, thoughtful. But there is something in his image and general appearance that gives rise to the spectator's sympathy: as if he is so mighty, that he can't be located in himself. There is something superhuman in him. There are the same flashes of light on the Epic hero's beard and his moustache. They are associated with the famous reflexes on the faces full of mystic exaltation at saints and forefathers of humanity which were imprinted by a great icon-painter.

The image of *Svyatogor* is associated with Roerich himself. Not with his fragile figure, but with the recognition of his great merits, his talent in his life time. But probably with that size of his spirit and his thoughts, and probably unsolved ideological questions about which he "utters" in the art. It is possible that the image of Roerich is associated with that load of unpronounced confession, about which he eloquently "keeps silence" in his painting "Confession" (Fig. 4). Not coming back to his Motherland in

its severe military time. Not ever coming back. It goes without saying that he is a man of the world. But sometimes the soul of the “great-small” man is crying in his paintings.

The purpose of the given, author’s “hermeneutical” glance at the creative works of N.K. Roerich was also the intention to abstract from the stereotypes of opinions about the works of this artist, stamped representations to show the necessity of clearing up the senses of an artistic work, which are not clear, but are hidden and wait for their researcher.



**FIG. 4. N.K. ROERICH. REPENTANCE (1917),
62.8 x 80.5, OIL AND TEMPERA ON CANVAS.
(NICHOLAS ROERICH MUSEUM, NEW YORK, USA.)**

And in the conclusion – about “sacral”. The sacral theme is very *popular* nowadays and has caught the masses’ consciousness of the society. But where in one row with the category “sacral” is the word “popularity” – there is the danger of *profanation*. The theme of sacral Altai is actively exploited, for example, in cinema production by young producers, with unexplained mystification of places and people, with invented wonderful plots, with forcing of fear and horror. It is still necessary to understand

and remember that “sacral” doesn’t bear noise and falsehood.

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REPRODUCTION OF THE SACRED ASPECTS OF CULTURE IN ETHNO-SOUVENIR PRODUCTION

I.V. LEONOV, I.V. KIRILLO AND A.O. PIYANTINOV

Souvenirs are a common phenomenon in modern culture. In modern world, it is hardly possible to find a house where there would be no souvenirs presented to the owners or purchased by them. Also, quite often, souvenirs decorate workplaces, cars and accompany a person as things of everyday use that are with him almost constantly; recommendations are placed in fashion magazines – when developing an apartment’s interior design, provide shelves for souvenirs in it in advance. Having become an almost indispensable attribute of modern life, souvenirs have found their firm place in cultural space: in the field of gifts and entertainment, in tourism industry and other segments of everyday and festive life.

An independent direction in the development of the souvenir industry is the production and replication of ethno-souvenir products, the most important function of which is to remind about the traditional past of many cultures, as well as to preserve some traditional aspects of culture (even in a slightly modified form) and broadcast them to subsequent generations. From this perspective, souvenirs that reproduce traditional (including sacred) artifacts can be perceived as quite appropriate. On the other hand, this product, following the tastes and low level of ethno-cultural literacy of the mass consumer, as well as pursuing purely economic goals and often undergoing severe distortions, provokes inorganic transformations and ‘mutations’ of the ‘hereditary genome’ of the cultures that it represents; many souvenirs are created on the verge of kitsch, it is important for them to be ‘noticed and sold’. As a result, a contradictory

picture is emerging in the industry under consideration, when a massive and rather effective channel for broadcasting traditional aspects of culture works ineffectively, and sometimes to the detriment of the harmonious transfer of the hereditary material of a particular culture.

One aspect of this issue is the production and replication of artifacts as ethno-souvenir products that are or were previously related to the sacred sphere. Similarly, this remark applies to the replication of certain elements of sacred artifacts or the reproduction of their figurative and symbolic aspects on souvenir products. Currently, in souvenir shops, you can often find key rings, dishes, cups, ballpoint pens, etc. products that reproduce, imitate or reflect the forms or images of religious objects. At the same time, such souvenirs can often preserve the sacred aspects of reproducible phenomena for their owners. Sometimes, as a souvenir may be reproduced artifacts related to pagan, magical and shamanic cults (for example, a shaman drum), the right to own and use of which has historically been limited to a circle of persons, and their sacred status is fully open only to initiates; in addition, direct contact with such artifacts has been accompanied by many taboos for society. This tendency often applies to objects of religious worship. These and many other examples provoke ambiguity in the perception of such products by representatives of different cultures, generations and social groups.

Considering this problem, first of all, it is necessary to point out that the existence of souvenirs in modern culture has fairly significant prehistoric and psychomental grounds. This phenomenon is not reduced to its understanding as a mass-culture innovation, replicated at a low-quality level and focused solely on the economic factor.

The word 'souvenir' (from the French) means an artifact designed to remind of someone, of something; often a souvenir is understood as "an artistic product, individual consumer goods reflecting the national, natural, cultural and other peculiarities of a country, region, city visited by tourists, and purchased by them as a keepsake or as a gift to others". A souvenir is primarily of an iconic nature, it awakens certain situations in memory, reminding about them. This is a kind of 'memory hook' (an individual memory), a 'thread', a sign that provides a connection with the past, with

any event or with another person, awakening their images in memory and returning in the imagination a departed reality; in other words, 'bodily organized mnemonics' is carried out through souvenirs, which makes it possible to increase the amount of memory through associations and connections. Accordingly, the semantic or associative load of a souvenir as a phenomenon closely associated with the information-semiotic core of culture is no less significant, and sometimes even more significant, than its material form. Running a little ahead, we note that the 'semantic aura' of many souvenirs can acquire extremely great significance for their owners, as a result of which souvenirs become 'sacred' for them. In this case, T.Yu. Bystrova, points out that "souvenirs are made, not born. Accordingly, if an object loses its semantic halo, it becomes deactivated, losing the status of a souvenir (a shell can "turn" into a substance of nature)"¹.

Souvenir products are quite diverse, which gives grounds for compiling various typologies. For example, the classification proposed by T.Yu. Bystrova and A.K. Khismatulin, includes three groups. The first of them consists of individual and group souvenirs, and the latter, in turn, are subdivided into professional, confessional and corporate. The second group includes traditionalist, classical, post-nonclassical, informational souvenirs, created with an orientation to different value-semantic systems of culture. The last group includes passive, active and interactive souvenirs. In the context of this study, based on the tradition of N.Ya. Danilevsky and O. Spengler, who defended the individual and unique features of each individual cultural type and organism, it seems appropriate to focus on this type of souvenir product (completely independent, rather isolated and qualitatively defined) as an ethnic souvenir.

The phenomenon of souvenir production appeared in the second half of the 19th century; its origin is directly related to the modernization processes that affected many cultures during this period. However, as mentioned above, the phenomenon under consideration has a prehistory, deep roots, including *archetypal* ones. All kinds of 'memos', 'commemorations', etc. – small items that have existed since ancient times in various cultures, are reminiscent of a spiritual or worldly phenomena

and provided the owner 'a connection' with a certain entity, location, phenomenon, material object or a living being – it is not customary, of course, to be counted among souvenirs in the modern sense of this term, however, they are clearly related to the research subject. It should also be noted that in the cultures of Western European countries, the roots of souvenirs go back to religious pilgrimages, primarily to Palestine and to Santiago de Compostela (Spain): pilgrims tried to bring all sorts of small items from sacred places, believing that they were endowed with supernatural power; already in the middle ages, workshops at Christian monasteries produced special badges for sale to pilgrims². Historically, man has shown the property of 'objectifying' the past and the present; people needed material confirmation of their *historical memory*, memories and psycho-emotional experiences (including the most valuable of them). As a result, this or that artifact became a 'key' to a certain reality, acquiring a significant status.

In addition, in the context of the issue under consideration, it is appropriate to turn to the phenomenon of fetishism, which, since the earliest period of history, has become one of the forms of interaction with reality by attributing supernatural abilities to material objects, including the provision of stable connections and methods of interaction with a variety of facets of life. Fetishistic manifestations in a distant and somewhat modified form are also characteristic of some of the studied souvenir products. In this case, the abundance of souvenirs is indicative, which can be initially created, as well as perceived by the mass consumer as amulets. It is of interest that in these phenomena, the echoes of which can be seen in souvenir products, various functions appear, either directly or indirectly linking them to the sacred component of culture – *the object affects reality and provides connections with another reality; the object protects; the subject is valuable, it is endowed with value-semantic significance*. At the same time, the sphere of the sacred appears as rather isolated from the ordinary and trivial components of culture, which makes appeal to it at the level of mass production of souvenirs a very contradictory phenomenon.

The term 'sacred' (from Latin *sacrum* – 'dedicated to the gods', 'sacramental', 'forbidden', 'cursed') means "property, the possession

of which puts an object in a position of exceptional significance, enduring value and on this basis requires reverence for it". The etymology of the word is largely related "to the meaning of separateness, concealment, inviolability"³; the sacred is fundamentally distinguished from the 'ordinary', 'profane', in religious cultures, the sacred is perceived as an absolute, eternal reality, as *the substance of being*. "In the picture of the world, the sacred plays the role of a structure-forming principle: in accordance with the ideas of the sacred, other fragments of the world picture are built and their hierarchy is formed"⁴. The most complete understanding of the sacred is expressed in the religious worldview, so it is often understood that the sacred refers to a religious cult or ritual⁵. However, such a narrowed, 'reduced' definition is not entirely correct, since many pagan artifacts and phenomena also belong to the category of the sacred (and for the new and modern times, the 'sacralization' of some worldly objects, persons and phenomena is characteristic).

The considered essence of the sacred gives rise to the problem of reproduction of related artifacts as souvenirs that mean or 'objectify' which in its absolute expression has a different nature and cannot be formally produced, replicated and introduced into everyday life at the level of everyday things. Nevertheless, there are a number of circumstances that must be taken into account when considering this problem, namely, the factor of different degrees of perception of the sacred in modern cultures, that is, the level of its value-semantic fullness in terms of actualization today. The noted degrees can vary quite significantly both in relation to different periods of cultural genesis, and in the space of various social groups oriented to certain value-semantic attitudes. As a result, what was historically positioned in a particular culture as sacred can act for some as truly sacred and significant, while for others it may look like an echo of past eras, serve as an object of respect for their own culture, act as its external marker or the basis for expressing their own ethnocultural identity, etc.; to the extent that the sphere of the sacred of a certain culture, including its historical transformations, may, in principle, not be perceived by the consumer due to lack of knowledge about this or due to belonging to

other sacred worldview traditions.

One of the essential aspects of the analysis of the distribution of ethno-souvenir products, including reproducing sacred artifacts, is taking into account such a marker as the exit of many cultures from the state of 'pre-modern' to the period of modernization (mainly correlated with the Newest time) – with the corresponding complex of worldview changes that affect the phenomenon under consideration

For 'pre-modern' cultures, there was a pronounced emphasis on the sacred side of reality; pre-modern people possessed a 'cosmic feeling', could see sacred meanings in all manifestations of being; ordinary everyday acts – ploughing, mowing, eating, etc. – often acquired a liturgical significance for them. In modern times, the cultural situation in Europe has fundamentally changed: the society imbued with mythological and religious consciousness was radically transformed, which caused, in particular, a radical change in the attitude towards the sacred. Subsequently, similar phenomena occurred in other regions of the world. Describing the destruction of 'sacred images', K.G. Jung wrote: "Unconscious forms have always been expressed in protective and healing images, and thus carried out into outer space lying outside the soul. The storm of images undertaken by the Reformation literally made a breach in the protective wall of sacred symbols... The history of the development of Protestantism is a chronicle of the storm of images. One wall fell after another... Large and small, universal and singular, the images shattered one after another, until finally came the terrifying symbolic poverty that reigns now. Protestant humanity pushed out of the protective walls"⁶.

To fill the resulting 'spiritual vacuum' modern society has created a whole system of new-made fetishes, which can be money (which has acquired a universal symbolic nature and the ability to replace many images and represent many types of human relations), various consumer goods, commercial advertising, etc. This is coupled, in particular, with the concept of 'commodity fetishism' first formulated by Karl Marx: Marx wrote that in the religious sphere, "the products of the human brain appear to be independent creatures endowed with their own lives, standing in definite relations with people and with each other. The same thing happens in the

world of goods with the products of human hands. I call this fetishism, which is inherent in the products of labor, as long as they are produced as goods, and which, therefore, is inseparable from commodity production”⁷. The reification of everything (including memory and impressions), supported by the narrowing of the spiritual sphere of culture, has become one of the main symptoms of modernization processes. This is quite clearly manifested by the logic of wide distribution of souvenir products, which ‘simulates in plastic’ various facets of reality and to some extent compensates for the poverty of the spiritual sphere of the consumer society through a multitude of associations, reminders and allusions to the personal experience of the owners. A refrigerator decorated with magnets has become a kind of ‘altar’ or ‘showcase of personal experience’ for a significant number of our contemporaries.

It seems that souvenir products to a very large extent serve to fill in the spiritual lacunae of culture formed in modern times. An object with a strong value-semantic gravity has simulative properties, returning, prompting and forming the world of associations and impressions that a person once experienced. This property acquires a high degree of effectiveness, if a person is surrounded by a complex of artifacts that simulate a certain individually experienced reality. And if we take into account that games of imagination about the reproduction of the past are sometimes conducted with a significant share of distortions and additions, souvenirs can become guides to the world of idealized impressions.

If we turn to the private aspects of the influence of modernization on the sphere under consideration, it should be noted that the very existence of the phenomenon of souvenir products is primarily associated with the emergence of mass production, with the very possibility of creating many identical items very quickly and cheaply (it was difficult 200 years ago). The spread of new materials (primarily plastics), the creation of conveyors and automated production have significantly influenced the specifics of the material space of mass culture, including souvenirs. In addition, the evolution of the phenomenon under consideration was greatly influenced by the development of the film, photo and video industries, the development of the media sphere; at the end of the 20th century – the

emergence of internet and fundamental changes in everything related to the processing, storage and transmission of information.

Many aspects of the studied phenomenon at the instrumental level are determined by psycho-emotional and behavioral aspects of the mass consumer. So, one of the specific features of modern consumption is 'the pleasure of small waste', 'the pleasure of feeling oneself as a *subject*'⁸: buying, a person gets satisfaction, realizing his 'consistency', joining the society and location; this naturally applies to the purchase of souvenirs. Another aspect of the topic under study is a person's desire to 'document' his life through confirmation of his presence in certain places; this trend began to manifest itself especially clearly during the spread of mass tourism. The optimal form of materialization of these confirmations was souvenirs and photographs (it is noteworthy that both these products are often combined within the framework of one souvenir product that carries a visual image). Another notable aspect is that a souvenir, being in most cases a fairly cheap product, began to be introduced into the sphere of gifts: a person returning from a trip, instead of individually selected 'gifts', brings a series of inexpensive standard products, presenting them to relatives and friends, essentially formalizing this process. In addition, a souvenir often becomes the basis of gifts within the framework of business culture and everyday communication between people; here it should be noted that a souvenir as a form of gift has long been manifested at the level of diplomatic culture⁹; These properties of souvenirs reflect their deep connections with the phenomenon of donations, which interested such scientists as M. Moss, K. Levi-Strauss, B. Malinovsky and J. Huizinga. The stability of this trend is ensured by the fact that a souvenir acts as a form of materialization of signs of attention, largely realizing the above archetypal aspects of ensuring connections between people. In this case, a study by H. Wilkins is indicative, according to which in the USA over 75% of women and 60% of men buy souvenirs for future donation¹⁰.

A rather remarkable factor that contributes to the popularization of souvenirs in cultures immersed in modernization processes is the process of nation-building, the growth of national identity and the 'branding' of nations. Many peoples and super-ethnic formations began to need special

spheres of consolidation of national self-consciousness, ideology and identity through certain aspects of traditional culture and corresponding phenomena. In the course of nation-building in many cultures, various artifacts began to be popularized and massively produced, reflecting the rootedness and stability of folklore traditions, providing the historical, genetic and inter-generational continuity of these cultures. These processes, taking the form of appropriate 'humanitarian technologies', find their manifestation in our days at the level of popularization of individual phenomena of national and ethnic cultures, as well as their complexes accompanying various measures for nation-building. An illustrative example in this case is largely spontaneous popularization of *kokoshniks* in Russia during the 2018 FIFA World Cup. Also an illustrative example is the official promotion of traditional housing and utensils, elements of traditional clothing, for example, shoes, shirts, ornamental elements, etc. For example, many nomadic and semi-sedentary peoples of the Eurasian region place special emphasis in this area on the image and individual details of the *yurt*, *ails* and other types of nomadic dwellings, the necessary attributes of nomadic clothing and everyday objects (cold steel, lighters, tursuks – leather bags for *kumis*, etc.), for traditional games and competitions, as well as for festive events. Souvenirs are also a very common form of embodiment of the noted technologies.

In addition, the tendency to focus on the traditional ethnic and national aspects of culture continues and intensifies in the context of the development of the tourism industry and inter-cultural contacts at the level of *branding of national cultures*. Not only are nations branded, but also cities (Petersburg, Venice), regions, individual objects (castles, etc.). In this case, a souvenir is one of the most important components of the popularization of the national color, influencing both external and internal consumers. Moreover, the parameters of the influence of these products on the consumer can be different: from ensuring a completely correct translation of cultural and genetic experience, effective nation building and increasing the level of ethno-cultural literacy of the mass consumer to provoking cultural and genetic breaks and distortion of the 'hereditary material' of culture – which gives rise to a number of problems, associated,

among other things, with the complexity of the expert assessment of this product and the insufficient study of its techno-humanitarian potential.

It should be noted that the sphere of ethno-traditional souvenirs, reflecting the above tendencies, is heterogeneous. We are talking about different proportions of the ratio of 'high-quality' souvenir products, close to authentic 'prototypes', and inexpensive handicrafts that only remotely imitate or rather strongly distort the originals, which is sometimes very acute and painful when replicating the sacred aspects of culture. Accordingly, the border between an ethno-cultural artifact, correctly reproduced as a souvenir, and its unsuccessful replica is fuzzy, giving rise to a mass of transitional forms between the two indicated poles. At the same time, at the stage of the formation of mass culture, in the late 19th–first half of 20th centuries, the role of souvenirs was often performed by traditional handicraft products produced by artels, small enterprises, and individual handicraftsmen. These products in one way or another had differences from the 'prototypes' that exist in traditional culture, but these differences in many cases were minimal. However, over time, the balance began to shift towards factory products, often cheap and of low quality (although souvenirs close to 'prototypes' are still produced in our time).

Returning to the main line of research, we note that almost from the very appearance of souvenirs as a mass phenomenon in various cultures, there has been large-scale use of sacred images, symbols and artifacts. This is largely due to the fact that in the second half of the 20th century, everywhere there was a surge of mass (and sometimes superficial) interest in the cultures of various ethnic groups, regions, countries, caused, among other things, by the partial overcoming of Eurocentrism. The factors that provoked this interest were the growth of the tourism sector of cultural industries, as well as the saturation of the communicative space of world culture with relevant information.

The very phenomenon of 'souvenir' in the minds of many people has a close connection with such a phenomenon as 'tourism'; it is noteworthy in this case that etymologically 'souvenir' in French literally means "that which was brought from the way". As a result of this proximity, the souvenir industry practically merged with the tourism sector, which led

to the 'tradition' of purchasing souvenirs as an indispensable attribute of travel – which caused corresponding transformations in the souvenir products themselves. Most of the souvenirs are small, cheap items; they have a “very moderate dose of authenticity”, are 'serial neutral' and often functional. As a result, products reflecting the ethno-traditional aspects of many cultures often convey not the local flavor, but what the tourist is ready to take for it¹¹. The researcher of this issue M.A. Koretskaya notes that as part of the implementation of these trends “the images used are carefully filtered, simplified and standardized. In the images, human faces and bodies acquire in some subtle way Europoid features ... Not to mention the fact that plots which are usually chosen for replication can be read by a superficial tourist as generally understandable and life-affirming. For example, on Egyptian souvenir *papyri* you can often see all kinds of cats (symbolizing home comfort), *scarabs* (as talismans for happiness), *Tutankhamun* and his wife (love and family ties) and much, much less often, the ritual of mummification or opening the mouth”¹².

Continuing to consider the topic of the low level of ethno-cultural literacy of the mass consumer, let us dwell on some issues related to the culture of consumption of souvenir products. Currently, the problem of plundering the cultural heritage of many countries and regions through its self-delivery for souvenirs is acutely manifested. So, from the Altai Republic (Russian Federation) tourists take out rock paintings (petroglyphs), easily chipping them off the layered rock; in addition, *balbals* – stone statues – are also exported. At the same time, many tourists do not even imagine what all these artifacts are connected with and what sacred role they play for local residents. There are quite a few examples of such ignorance and illiteracy, which is also manifested at the behavioral level, for example, in the case of tying ribbons to trees – a ritual that takes place in Altai in sacred places (for example, on passes) on the new moon and personifies offerings to spirits, masters, ancestors as a sign of respect and gratitude. Altai ideas about nature and, in particular, about sacred locations, that have historically existed, are described, for example, by researcher I.A. Zhernosenko¹³. The tourists 'perform' the indicated ceremony wherever they please and any time convenient for them;

moreover, instead of a ribbon, they also use towels, belts, socks (and sometimes, during the coronavirus pandemic – even medical masks). This behavior is sometimes perceived by local residents as painful. We also note that the historical and cultural heritage of the region is of exceptional scientific value¹⁴. In this regard, it should be said about the positive aspects of the distribution of mass souvenirs – it allows you to fill the lacuna in the consumption of memorabilia and distracts the consumer from the spontaneous (and sometimes barbaric) collection of Altai cultural heritage for ‘souvenirs’.

Turning to the consideration of examples of ethno-souvenir products that reproduce the sacred phenomena of culture, it is necessary to remind that the internal existence of the value-semantic field of culture can be ambiguous, as a result of which its carriers can perceive in different ways both the traditions and the value-semantic ‘constants’ of their own culture, including its sacred sphere, especially in view of its historical and genetic transformations (for example, as in the case of the split into ‘pre-modern’ and ‘modern’ states of culture). In addition, it should be remembered that people from different cultures sometimes do not take the axiospheres of other cultures to heart, even with some knowledge about these cultures. Also, the axiosphere may not be perceived due to the complete ethno-cultural illiteracy of the consumer, or the rejection of a certain axiosphere on his part may be conscious. Due to this complexity, it is rather difficult to single out ‘pure’ and unambiguous examples of successful and unsuccessful use of the sacred aspects of cultures in souvenir products.

An illustrative example of the reproduction of sacred aspects of traditional cultures are the aforementioned souvenirs reflecting magic and shamanistic cults, including the attributes of implementation of the corresponding rituals. A separate group of examples in this case is represented by souvenir reproduction of ritual masks, the sacred component of which is practically not perceived by modern consumer. It is significant in this case, the research of V.V. Podmaskin; studying on the example of the Russian Far East the process of converting a ceremonial facemask into an object of artistic craft and purely aesthetic impact on a person, he noted: “Using peoples’ technical and artistic experience,

homeworkers create works of art with an image of masks on them which are used as decoration for clothes, pendants, presented as gifts, serve as a symbol of ethnicity, reflect the stylistic features of artistic culture. Among the crafts of the ethnos of the region, artistic crafts with modern forms of their organization prevail. Masks-guises, which have completely lost their primary ritual function, have become objects of decorative and applied art, often of a souvenir character"¹⁵. However, even in our time, representatives of many ethnic cultures still have a reverent attitude to authentic objects of magic and shamanic cults, which contributes to their disapproval of the 'profane' replication of such artifacts or their elements.

Another example is the replication of shaman drums in all kinds of souvenir modifications. So, in the souvenir shops located on the Chuysky tract (Altai Republic), you can find reduced 'copies' of shaman drums with images of bears, wolves, geese, marals, fish, etc.; these images are the work of fiction of their authors and contradict the traditions of the Altaians. Most often, when applying images, patterns and various signs to souvenirs, manufacturers try to maintain the style of rock paintings and runic writing – to create the illusion of authenticity, so that the product evokes associations with antiquity and sacraments among buyers. There are also purely naturalistic images of certain animals. But it is important to remember that the consumer sees not just a percussion instrument, even with adornments, but drums, which competent people, initiated into the tradition, call 'non-working'. In other words, after carrying out certain procedures on these drums, you can perform shamanic *kamlanie* (or imitate it). But the required rituals are not observed while manufacturing a drum (sometimes because the manufacturer simply does not know about their necessity and their order). In addition, distortions also concern the technical aspects of reproduced artifacts. In particular, the ritual part is not observed when searching for and obtaining the material itself for making the rim and drum skins: lunar-calendar features, place of growth of the tree are not taken into account; prescribed conditions for killing an animal and dressing its skin are not observed about the order of making drum, historically accepted among the Altaians¹⁶.

Researchers of shamanism unequivocally note that a tambourine is

the main attribute of a shaman; without him a shaman is not a shaman. Studying the rituals of the indigenous peoples of Siberia, one can distinguish many common features in rituals and in the attributes used in their performance; such attributes include, in addition to a drum, a *komus* (jew's harp), a tambourine beater, bells, various drum body kits, shaman's vestments, etc. And all these items we see in souvenir shops in Altai – on the shore of the Teletskoye lake, near the Arzhan-Suu spring, on the Seminsky and Chike-Taman passes and in many other places, which are still revered by the Altaians as sacred and where traditional rituals are performed. The internet is replete with offers to sell drums for 'practical' purposes; being a popular phenomenon in modern culture, shaman drums are used as logos and trademarks; their images, often far from the originals, are widely represented in the media space and in the visual urban environment. Some consumers buy such drums for meditation, others just as a musical instrument, and others see them as exotic souvenirs. 'Tools', which once terrified the bearers of certain cultures, nowadays have become consumer goods available in any form, any format, any quantity... Due to the noted deviations, these items, reminiscent of the ethno-traditional past, can be perceived as a 'shadow', 'echo' of the past – with the loss of sacred aspects.. It can be assumed that a shaman drum, produced with a deviation from the historical and cultural 'canon' and in souvenir forms, can be perceived as an 'empty' object in the sacred plan, only indicating the existence of powerful originals, which in traditional society was even dangerous to touch. All sorts of deviations from the canon, for example from authentic images, can represent a kind of *justification for the right of distant copies to exist*. Accordingly, having passed through the filters of mass cult simplifications, an artifact reminiscent of the sacred can be perceived as something acceptable, permissible – due to the presence of distance from the authentic. Representatives of many cultures regard such copy-souvenirs as something legitimate, although not entirely desired, just because of the weak degree of authenticity, understanding where is an authentic item and where is its imitation. However, the paradox lies in the fact that deviation from the original can negatively affect the consumers of this product (both at the inter-cultural and intra-cultural levels),

distorting their perceptions of the past. In addition, it must be remembered that some carriers of certain cultures perceive distant and low-quality copies purely negatively – precisely because of their fake, deviation from the canon and intrusion into the sphere of the sacred.

Among other examples of the replication of various aspects of shamanic rituals, one can note the fans in the form of bird feathers, which are realized in the Altai Republic, as well as ‘dream catchers’ not related to the culture of the Altai people. At the same time, sellers of such products sometimes indicate that ‘catchers’ keep good dreams, and miss bad ones, which is a complete delusion. Also, as an example, we can cite *topshurs* (a plucked musical instrument) made in violation of technology, which have a sacred meaning for the Altaians; these violations simplify and understate the value of the instruments compared to their original status. In addition, modern mass culture, including the souvenir industry, is characterized by the use of significant and ‘strong’ images of Altai culture, for example, the images of a shaman and a hunter – the master of the taiga. The practice of performances with costumed ‘shamans’ and souvenirs in the form of trophies of wild animals, initially associated with the owner of the taiga, does not arouse the approval of the local population, since the sacred status of these images does not imply their everyday use to increase the entertainment and attractiveness of the goods.

The study of the subject shows that most of the sacred aspects of culture reproduced in souvenir products belong to the ‘pre-modern’ stages of cultural genesis of certain cultures, which demonstrates the importance of the time distance between the existence of a particular artifact as a sacred one and its reproduction at the ‘profane’ level. As a result, souvenir shops most vividly position artifacts related to the pagan stages of cultural genesis (for example, Turkish *nazars* – amulets that protect against the evil eye). Of course, souvenirs reproduce (although somewhat less often) religious sacred artifacts, but this does not apply to all religious traditions; an example is the Japanese *omamori* amulets.

In addition, it is important to touch upon such a facet of the considered problem as the replication of traditions, including their sacred components, in interaction with innovation processes. Unfortunately, the

field under study is dominated by innovative influences on ethno-traditional souvenir products, which increase the distance between it and authentic samples, multiplying the precedents of incorrect use of the sacred aspects of culture. An illustrative example related to the replication of the 'secular sacred' is the production of Soviet symbols on souvenirs to please the mass (predominantly Western) consumer, which, from the point of view of many Russian citizens, sometimes takes on the character of a disrespectful and tendentious interpretation of images and symbols related to Soviet history. It should be noted that in different cultures, state symbols (and in particular the symbols of the army and navy) have a different status. And if for citizens of certain Western countries, the application of the image of the state flag on items of clothing that are related to the bodily bottom (for example, ladies' swimwear) seems to be quite acceptable, then in Russia the attitude towards this practice is very ambiguous, and among many citizens it is frankly disapproving. A similar attitude is also caused, for example, by bath attributes with the symbols of the Red Army; souvenir hats with earflaps of 'inorganic' colors for these products (pink, light green) with badges of the Soviet Army; nesting dolls containing caricature and grotesque images of Soviet and Russian leaders, etc. products that flooded the souvenir shops of the cities of the Russian Federation, especially frequently visited by foreign tourists.

Nevertheless, focusing on the internal complexity of this area, it is appropriate to point to a number of positive aspects showing that it is possible to adequately and carefully use the potential of souvenir replication to preserve and popularize the ethno-traditional foundations of culture, including its sacred components. A compromise option for replicating the sacred aspects of culture in souvenir products is a partial deviation from the canons, caused by the very need for fast and cheap production of relevant artifacts. However, in this case, we are talking only about some deviations, while maintaining a high percentage of authentic aspects. So, in many modern cultures, traditional artifacts are reproduced in inauthentic materials (for example, porcelain *tursuks* and *chorons* – Yakut vessels for consumption of *kumis*). However, the masters who are engaged in this field are often representatives of traditional cultures – carriers of

relevant knowledge, technologies and experience. In addition, the forms, images, colors, and other components of such souvenir artifacts are often quite correlated with their prototypes. In this case, a partial deviation from the canon can be interpreted as quite acceptable, provided that most of the requirements for authentic reproduction of sacred artifacts are met.

When analyzing the products under study, it is important to remember that tradition and innovation are constantly interacting; the same applies to some transformations of the sphere of the sacred, which can change, expand, become somewhat blurred and perceived differently within different eras, generations and social groups. The sacred, like many other components of culture, cannot be absolutely immutable; completing and supplementing, losing some aspects and gaining others, passing from one form of consciousness to another (including during the transition from religious to secular), the sacred is preserved in modern conditions, undergoing transformations that are quite appropriate correlate with the architectonic processes of the transformation of cultural heritage recorded by I.V. Kondakov¹⁷. In this regard, it is indicative that many innovations that are relevant in our time, which have arisen in the sphere of many traditional cultures in the new and modern times, as well as influenced them from the outside, have become peculiar markers of national cultures, including markers of the perception of their sacred aspects from the standpoint of involvement in him. For example, the space of Altai culture in the 19th– early 20th century was enriched by such innovation as the artistic and spiritual heritage of N.K. Roerich, who paid special attention to Altai and perceived it as a powerful sacral center. As a result, at present, the Roerich heritage has become one of the most important components of Altai culture in its modern interpretation, penetrating into its architectonic structures and firmly rooted in them. Another example is the legacy of the Russian and Soviet artist, student of I.I. Shishkin, Grigory Ivanovich Gurkin (also known under the pseudonym Choros-Gurkin), who reflected the nature of Altai and the lifestyle of the Altaians so deeply and penetratingly that his painting, in many ways following the European pictorial tradition, became one of the markers of the formation of ethnic self-awareness and a sense of identity of modern Altaians. The situation

is similar in many cultures – many phenomena that are currently perceived by the bearers of these cultures as traditional, ‘original’, in fact, arose in the 19th – 20th centuries. However, in relation to the examples given with the legacy of N.K. Roerich and G.I. Gurkin, with regret we can state that there are not so many souvenirs reflecting the contribution of these outstanding personalities to the culture of Altai.

In addition, an interesting example of the enrichment of the ethno-traditional aspects of various cultures is the introduction into their ‘tradition-sphere’ of archaeological artifacts discovered and studied in the space of the corresponding historical and cultural zones only in the last two centuries. At the same time, cultures that existed in certain locations at different stages of history may not have direct genetic ties with each other, penetrating into this territory as a result of migration processes, or historically forming on it and replacing each other in the course of fairly long chronological intervals. As a result, history of the respective territories and the genesis of cultures in these areas is deepened and enriched by the heritage of previous cultures, which organically ‘fuses’ with the ‘hereditary material’ of subsequent cultures and is sometimes sacralized by them. One of the striking examples of such continuity in the Eurasian space is the sacralization by many ethnic groups of the heritage of the Scythian culture. Nevertheless, the study of the situation with souvenir products in Altai shows that archaeological images and artifacts associated with the cultural genesis of this territory are not properly reflected.

In this case, it can be noted that a visit to the Altai land could effectively complement the purchase of souvenirs with views of the Altai on the canvases of Choros-Gurkin, such as ‘Katun in spring’, ‘Lake in Lage’, ‘Yadygem River’, ‘Altai Mountain valley’, ‘Lake of mountain spirits’, ‘Khan Altai’, etc. No less attractive are souvenir items that reflect the shapes and images of artifacts found by archaeologists in the Scythian mounds, as well as in the mounds of presumably related Scythian cultures. It is noteworthy that the Scythian heritage once formed the basis of the collection of rarities of the Russian emperor Peter the Great, and now it is the pride and true decoration of the collection of the State Hermitage. Separately, we should highlight the finds made in 1929 by an expedition

led by academician S.I. Rudenko in the Pazyryk tract of the Bolshoy Ulagan river valley near the village of Balyktuyul. We are talking about a series of unique archaeological artifacts of the 6th–3rd centuries BC in the tombs of the Pazyryk tribal nobility, which have become world-famous due to the preservation of organic material (for example, the oldest pile carpet in the world). The heritage of the most ancient period of human history in the Altai (Denisova cave, Ust-Kansk cave, ulalinsky finds of A.P. Okladnikov, etc.) is also insufficiently popularized in the souvenir industry. Quite rarely, souvenir products reflect images associated with a significant layer of petroglyphic material of the Altai historical and cultural zone. However, unfortunately, instead of this group of images and objects, the modern tourist is more likely to purchase a mass pseudo-ethnic souvenir that reflects a certain eclecticism of heterogeneous material, sometimes not directly related to the culture of the region, for example, in Altai – African masks, Japanese fans, Tibetan singing bowls, ethno-cultural novelty created by the imagination of modern artists who do not bother to devote at least a little time to self-education in the field of history and specifics of cultures, with the images of which their creative imagination ‘plays’; and, finally, in many regions of the Eurasian area, such ‘Souvenirs’ as a wooden PPSH machine gun, wooden brass knuckles, signs with the words ‘Beware, evil dog!’ (using interspersed German words and styles for the German language); souvenirs related to the practice of Feng Shui and other largely meaningless products, are actively sold.

Concluding the analysis of the problem of replicating the sacred in ethno-souvenir products, we note that many contradictions and ambiguous situations caused by this phenomenon, are primarily based on *discrepancies associated with the contradiction of different pictures of the world and the problem of dialogue between them in modern conditions (especially in the context of the collision of various forms of consciousness, as well as in points of interaction of mass culture with ethno-traditional cultural complexes)*. Many ways of reflecting and explaining reality, which replace each other within the framework of individual cultures and represent the historical and cultural diversity of mankind, can have both points of contact and ‘points of contradiction’. Cultures and their carriers differ in the form of expression

of beliefs, understanding of the essence of life and basic philosophical issues. These attitudes find a lot of specific historical expressions at the level of pictures of the world, many of which exist today, interacting and sometimes not finding a common language. The scientific picture of the world is a relatively young phenomenon; along with it, there are many other ways to explain the essence of the universe, and for many cultures these ways are more relevant than the natural-scientific picture of the world. By default, each picture of the world positions itself as prosperous, and many mechanisms of interaction between cultures at the level of pictures of the world are reduced at best to silent neighborhood and acceptance of each other at the level of assuming the existence of another. At the same time, the situation of understanding 'personal' as 'correct' explicitly or latently places in the consciousness of a culture bearer a hierarchy of world pictures from the point of view of their truth. This factor, supported by the fact that all the above ways of reflecting reality find their manifestation in modern conditions, incredibly complicates the interaction between different pictures of the world, especially at the level of sacred aspects; this also affects the field of study.

Thus, the analysis of the stated topic shows that it is a complex area, which requires a competent and balanced approach and which cannot be assessed unambiguously. This situation opens up a whole niche for the development of the project and methodological basis of the theory of souvenirs and the corresponding expertise, designed to assess and recommend the production and distribution of souvenir products reflecting the sacred aspects of culture. "In this situation, culturology is quite capable of showing its expert (at least at the recommendatory level) and technological potential, one of the tasks of which is to study various mechanisms for the preservation and translation of culture, including the deep mechanisms of transmission and correction of the 'cultural genome' in the context of modern processes of cultural unification"¹⁸. We are talking about building expert opinions from the standpoint of assessing such technical parameters as material (authentic or not), creation technology, form, semantic load, color, sound, aromatic and tactile decisions, authorship, connection with cultural genetic layers, etc. It is also necessary

to take into account the factor of matching innovations that invade and sometimes successfully integrate into the sphere of ethno-traditional souvenirs. On this basis, in this series, it is necessary to highlight rather subjective markers, such as compliance with the 'image of the world' (with the inherent spatio-temporal gestalt, imaginative solutions, forms, etc.). Finally, and this is the main thing, *it is necessary to take into account the correspondence of these products to the semantic value and mental sphere of culture, taking into account its architectonic transformations in time, including the current state.*

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ETHNIC PICTURE OF THE WORLD IN INTER-DISCIPLINARY DISCOURSE

O.V. PERVUSHINA AND O.P. RESHETOVA

ABSTRACT

The article examines the concept of “ethnic picture of the world” - its archaic origins and modern interpretation - using the example of mental constructs of the Altai ethnos. The picture of the world of a person in the post-modern era is focused mainly on logical and epistemological approaches, pragmatism, rationality; and in the models of traditional culture, the emotional-symbolic nature of their formation, intuition and revelation play a decisive role. Ethnic cultures of Altai are distinguished by their deep originality and sign-symbolic experience, which is presented in traditional cultural practices and retains its lasting significance in the modern socio-cultural context.

Revealing the key sacred signs and symbolic images, whose interconnection forms the ethnic picture of the world, the author of the article comes to the conclusion that the concept of “sacred” defines the peculiarity of mythological thinking, where the myth modality index will be the criterion on the basis of which the content of the picture of the world of this or that ethnic group is constructed.

Keywords: ethnic picture of the world, mythological thinking, modality index, categories of space and time.

Ethnic picture of the world embodies and preserves the historical and cultural experience of the existence of ethnos in time and space, representing the results of adaptation of the humanity to a certain ecosystem, captured in language, customs, traditions, religious practices and lifestyle. Ethnic cultures as the oldest type of culture, their formation and development is connected with the historical formation of ethnic groups and cultural forms, which are stabilizing, unifying and contributing to the stability of ethnic groups in the face of natural, social and historical

challenges. The process of evolution of each ethnic group in time and space gave rise only to its inherent model of the “image of the world”, which explains the richness and diversity of ethnic cultures in the world.

The experience of ethnic consciousness based on other ways of perception and assessment of surrounding world, intuition, revelation, inference, figurative emotional experience, fantasy has not lost importance in the space of modern global innovation culture, which is based on the values of scientific knowledge, abstract-logical thinking, pragmatism and rationality.

Representatives of modern social and humanitarian knowledge, ethnologists, anthropologists, linguists, cultural scientists turn to the experience of ethnic cultures as a unique sign-symbolic education, which has value and significance not only for the ethnos of its spawning, but it is also universal, all-cultural. It not only makes it possible to understand its connection with the cultural experience of the past, determines the relationship between memorial and current in its structure, but also includes this experience in the contemporary picture of the human world of global culture. From our point of view, it can affect the sustainability of modern cultural world, both personal and supranational.

The research concept of “a world picture” in cultural science is based on attraction of inter-disciplinary discourse. Anthropogenetic processes, ethnogenesis and culturogenesis form the basis of the formation of diverse ethnic cultures in the world and, accordingly, the ways of their formation and development in each people explore history, philosophy, ethnology, ethnography, etc., (since the era of formation of the scientific picture of the world). But it is the concept of “ethnic picture of the world” that becomes relatively the subject of cultural research.

The prominent 20th-century philosophers B. Russell, M. Heidegger, L. Wittgenstein argue that the painting represents a global image of the world, forming world constants and defining the social practices of the existence of an individual and society¹. On the one hand, picture of the world is a comprehensive supra-personal education, which is formed during the life of the ethnic group. On the other hand, it lives in the consciousness of each individual refracting in its own way, taking into

account, the modern realities in which it is found.

Modern researchers representing different fields of social and humanitarian knowledge understand the picture of the world as a certain world, sign-symbolic education, a specific way of human awareness of the world and being in it, expressed in images, representations, language, traditions, art, etc., determined by the peculiarities of existence of a specific ethnic group². According to S.S. Gusev: "Each culture develops its own form of understanding, some canon of meaning formation, characterizing the corresponding presumption of meaning"³.

The picture of the world of a modern man - physical, scientific, artistic, humanitarian, determines the basic layer of functioning of the ethnic picture of the world as a nuclear, the central zone of culture⁴, which is the primary figurative and intuitive, metaphorical ideas about the world, recorded in the language of ethnos, rituals, customs, myths. Its study is necessary to understand the meanings and patterns of modern social and cultural processes, which in many ways go back to the experience of the formation of a particular ethnic group.

In the context of these arguments, in our view, it is necessary to turn to the method of phenomenological approach in the study of the ethnic picture of the world, the application of which will allow to analyze the primary cultural experience of ethnos. The method of phenomenological reduction developed by the creator of this philosophical direction, German philosopher E. Gusserl means the liberation of the researcher's consciousness from stereotypes, rationalized representations and the possibility of intuitive, figurative-emotional perception of the world, which was characteristic of the person of archaic culture, it was that defined the formation of the culture of ethnos. In order to identify the conditions for the constitution of the picture of the world by ethnos, it is necessary to refer to the works of the French philosopher M. Merlo-Ponti, who applies a phenomenological method in the study of man and world of culture, based on E. Gusserl's research, developing them in his own vision. Following E. Gusserl, he emphasizes the fact that modern humanitarian knowledge dominates the rationalist approach in the study of a man and culture, drawing attention to the fact that the interests of researchers should

be aimed at the desire to “Find naive contact with the world to give it finally philosophical status”⁵. In other words, in the study of man and culture, phenomenology puts forward to the first place not logical and gnoseological but sensual-shaped, intuitive, approaches, which are the basis for the formation of an ethnic picture of the world as an entity that takes the primary experience of man in perception and place in the surrounding world.

The philosopher draws attention to the problem of loss of a modern man’s ties with the culture of ancestors preceding the epochs, considering this not only as a violation of the process of continuity, but also as a reason for the destruction of spiritual and moral foundations: “Operational thinking becomes a form of absolute technicism (artificialisme)... where human creations are derived from some natural process of information, but this process itself is understood on the model of a human machine...”, and a man “enters a mode of culture where there is no longer, as far as a man is concerned with neither history, no true or false and falls into a sleep, or a nightmare from which nothing can awake”⁶. M. Merlo-Ponti, in the context of these reflections, attaches particular importance to the perception of the world, which is “spontaneous, or natural being”, “deconformed”, always assumed on the horizon of our reflexes, always available”⁷. Mythological consciousness, according to the scientist, reflects the experience of direct primary perception and development of the world.

The German philosopher and cultural scientist E. Cassirer, a representative of the Marburg School of Neocantianism, characterizes a man as a “symbolic animal,” and culture as a symbolic education, the result of symbolic human activity⁸. He makes a comment about the fact that the presence of a scientific picture of the world in the consciousness of a modern man does not mean overcoming and absence of a mythological picture of the world (ethnic picture of the world -O.V.) which “contains the world in another, original sense, when the world is discovered as a pure phenomenon of expression”⁹.

E. Cassirer based on the ways of the phenomenological method argues that perception becomes different, not limited to the logical and

gnoseological approach: "We do not plunge into chaos, but we continue to be surrounded by a perfect space. This kind of space appears before us in the structure of language and mythological world. And in this way we have received a much wider field of view to assess the perception itself"¹⁰. E. Cassirer further writes, "The world of myth is a dramatic world: a world of action, effort, struggling forces... Mythological perception is always imbued with these emotional qualities"¹¹, that is, the world of the bearer of the ethnic picture of the world is a world of myth as manifestations of genuine, deep and sincere feelings, largely unknown to the rational and pragmatic consciousness of a modern man.

The focus of symbolic activity consists in combining, systematizing meanings, images, symbols, signs into a certain cultural form, in this case, into an ethnic picture of the world. This process, according to E. Cassirer, is not spontaneous, it necessarily takes into account the "index of modality of culture"¹². By the term "modality index" of culture, the philosopher understands the uniqueness and specificity of formation and existence of each type of culture, which, in our opinion, has a direct relation to ethnic culture, as a truly unique phenomenon in comparison with modern mass culture, in which stereotype, unification and standard are defining characteristics. In other words, "modality index" is a certain view of perception, a method of "looking at the world", which is inherent in this culture as a unique configuration of meanings, symbols, signs, forms.

V.E. Semenov, the researcher of Cassirer's creativity, designates the "modality index" as a paradigm of understanding¹³, which is the basis of a specific symbolic construct, a picture of the world. It follows that the index of modality of the myth is the defining one in the ethnic picture of the world, where the concept of "sacral" is the central zone. Each of the ethnic cultures cannot be compared and subjected to comparative evaluation from this perspective, each ethnic picture of the world is self-worth and unique. The concepts of the ethnic picture of the world are the constants of "space" and "time". These constants are stable quantities. They can be seen as the primary way and experience of the archaic person's view of the world.

The study of the ethnic traditional culture of the nomadic ethnos of

Mongolia and Southern Siberia, mainly the Turks and Mongols belonging to the western branch of the Altai language family, provides a rich ethno-cultural material for understanding the ethnic picture of the world of these peoples, primarily through analysis of the categories of space and time. Because of the historical commonality of these peoples, whose ethnic cultures are largely interconnected, it is possible to identify similar elements that form a picture of the world of ethnic groups¹⁴.

Ethnographers, historians, linguists write that the interaction or confrontation of these peoples with each other for centuries is reflected and confirmed in mythological representations of the Turks and the Mongols. S. Y. Nekludov draws attention to the fact that for a considerable historical period the Turkic and Mongolian peoples lived in Central Asia and Southern Siberia, in particular, in the locus of the mountain-steppe zone of Altai, in close proximity and were in close social and cultural contacts “up to partial or complete assimilation”¹⁵.

The Turkic and Mongolian peoples perceive space as a multi-layered sign, symbolic structure having a sacral source and meaning. Cosmogonic myths and cosmological representations are certainly defining in this context. Moreover, the researchers of Turkic and Mongolian ethnic cultures identify universal symbolic structures that embody primary, basic human perceptions of the world. The major researchers E.M. Meletinsky, V.N. Toporov, V.V. Evsyukov insist that such ancient symbols are earth, water, sky, fire, tree, mountain, etc. The cosmogonic myths of the Mongols bear similarities to the representations of the Turkic peoples of Southern Siberia. It draws attention to the perception of water as the primary substance in Mongolian myths that underlies the emergence of the world: “Before there was no land, but there was only one water... Then the *angat* (bird)... dived into the water and from the bottom got the land; it brought black earth on the nose and red clay in paws. Sombol-*burhan* from the bird *hangata* forward took red clay and scattered on the water. And then he took the black land and scattered over the water, too; then the land formed, herbs and trees grew on it...”¹⁶. This myth bears similarities to the myths of the Altai peoples. A.M. Sagalayev, for example, emphasizes the symbolic primacy of the image of water in the myths of the Siberian Turks. It is

water, he writes... “the most powerful symbol of chaos”, which as if potentially stores in itself all future forms of life, which will unfold thanks to sacred divine will¹⁷. The image-symbol of the waterfowl is the key one in the ethnic picture of the world of the Turkic peoples of Siberia. As A.M. Sagalayev notes in the Altaian myth, “the bird attribute characterizes both creators, Ulgenya, who “steams over the waters” and “three-goiter Erlik”, but already as a waterfowl¹⁸. Thus, there is a dyad: air (the symbol of the sky) and water. Then these symbols unfold into the triad: water – earth - air. In our view, this triad needs to be supplemented: when it comes to the ethnic traditional culture of the Altai Turks, it is a symbol of the mountain, which is a key symbol for the Altai Turks, unlike the ethnic picture of the world of other peoples. This definition is confirmed by A.M. Sagalayev: “To say that mountain is the main element of the Altai landscape, it does not mean to say anything”¹⁹. L.P. Gekman also emphasizes the iconic and symbolic image and cult of the mountain, it is defining in the mythopoetics of the Altai peoples²⁰. In the collective study of scientists of the Institute of Mongolian Science, Buddhism and Tibetan Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences, *Space in the traditional culture of Mongolian peoples*²¹, mountains are considered to be the embodiment of the sacred idea, the connection of Heaven and Earth. In our opinion, in this sense, stone altars are of interest, they are *obo tash* (“ovo”, “ova”), which represent not just elevation, but symbolize and embody the image of the mountain and they are connected with its sacral cult. Similar stone elevations of man-made character, collected from a pile of stones, are known not only in Altai, but also found in Mongolia, Buryatia, Kyrgyzstan. The researchers associate this cult (such structures of stones are found, as a rule, on transshipments) with the cult of the mountain²².

The image of the mountain not only has “hosts”, spirit, but the mountains themselves are living sacralized creatures. Accordingly, the myths about “water - earth - sky - mountain” are a significant sign-symbolic constant in the ethnic picture of the world of the Turkic and Mongolian peoples of Southern Siberia and Mongolia. These key symbols for archaic consciousness form a semiotic complex, which unfolds into a picture of the world of ethnos acquiring sensual and empirical and at the same time

iconic and symbolic experience of implementation.

Thus, it is possible to draw the following conclusions of the analysis. Firstly, the ethnic picture of the world is a landmark and symbolic entity that is created by the “collective unconscious” ethnos (K.G. Jung) throughout its historical existence, deterministic of the space-time continuum. Secondly, the ethnic picture of the world is the image of the world, the configurations of which are determined by the sacral-axiological orientations of this ethnic group. Thirdly, the ethnic picture of the world is a special form of the world of ethnos, where figurative and emotional, intuitive, sensual, “expressive” (E. Cassirer) elements are dominant regarding logical and rational perception and evaluation of reality. Fourthly, mythological consciousness is a way of semiotic embodiment and deployment of the ethnic picture of the world in time and space; the ethnic picture of the world as an embodiment of the spirit of ethnos can be objectified from specific historical realities and “live” in the “Great Time of Culture” (M.M. Bakhtin), without losing its meanings and significance for distant descendants²³. At the same time, it is important not to lose shape-sense constants, axiological and sacral values of our ancestors in the space of modern global culture.

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