

SHAREVSKAIA, B. I. — THE FIRST RUSSIAN SCHOLAR OF TRADITIONAL AFRICAN BELIEFS

It has been 120 years since the birth and 40 years since the death of Bertha Isaakovna Sharevskaiia (1904-1985), the first Russian scholar of African religions. After graduating from Lomonosov Moscow State University, B. Sharevskaiia began to study the history of the ancient world, especially the religious ideas of the Greeks and Romans. Her interest in the origins of religious beliefs naturally grew into attention to their traditional forms. Starting as the head of the Ancient World Department of the Central Museum of Antireligion, she soon turned her attention to African spiritual culture. B. Sharevskaiia emphasized the complexity and ambiguity of this phenomenon, analyzed the dynamics and trends in the development of beliefs, their connection with politics, the mutual influence of local traditions and world religions, etc. B. Sharevskaiia's scientific legacy includes more than 150 publications - books, articles, reports, translations, etc. Her monograph "Old and New Religions of Tropical Africa" is still in demand as an encyclopedia of African religions. She was also involved in art, which was closely related to the ritual life of Africans. While working in scientific institutions and participating in international forums, she successfully combined her active work with teaching at the Faculty of History and the Institute of Oriental Languages (Institute of Asian and African Countries) of the Moscow State University. Today, numerous students of B. Sharevskaiia continue her work, developing various aspects of the scientific direction she founded.

Keywords: Africa, traditional beliefs, Afro-Christian churches, "the Africanization" of Christianity, religion and politics

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For citation: Lvova, E. S. 2025. Sharevskaiia, B. I. — The First Russian Scholar of Traditional African Beliefs. *Herald of Anthropology (Vestnik Antropologii)* 3: 421–438.

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